George Frederick Burckhartt and The Origin of The Missouri State Seal

by
Mary Miller
Smiser

Mrs. George Ella Burckhartt Miller

GEORGE FREDERICK BURCKHARTT AND THE ORIGIN OF THE MISSOURI STATE SEAL

AND

BURCKHARTTS IN MISSOURI HISTORY

by

Mary Miller Smiser

Editor, Robert C. Jones

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Daniel E. Anderson
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— THE PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLICATION —

To present facts, documented personal recollections, and published information regarding the designing of the Missouri State Seal.

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Editor's Introduction

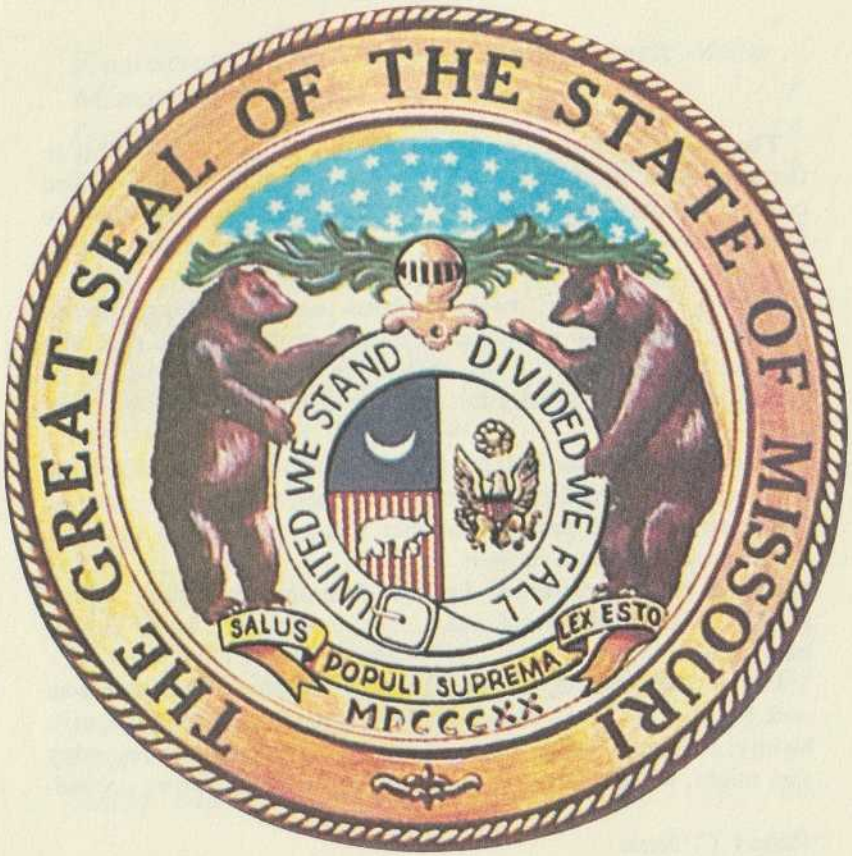
The lessons of history wait patiently for us, just a heartbeat in the past. Here, in Missouri, in the beginning of our country's third century, the past seems sometimes elusive: child-like and hard to grasp when compared with the centuries-old memories of our European ancestors.

But in a pleasant, russet-shingled home in Warrensburg, Missouri, I met, two years ago, a student of that elusive past who showed, through wise — yet still-young — eyes, the lessons of history that wait timelessly for us to see them, to re-discover them anew.

Mary Miller Smiser has, for the past fifty years, devoted a large part of her considerable energies and enthusiasms to the preservation of the past. To see her today, constrained by those weaknesses that flesh is heir to, is to be reminded of Rodin's masterful bronze portrait of *La Belle Heaulmière:* trapped though she is by the unforgiving years, her indomitable spirit shines, undimmed.

In the words that follow, we discover — captured for those who seek the past — Mary Miller Smiser's legacy: a gift of Missouri's history, a lesson in historical investigation, a doorway into yesterday that might, without her skills and insights, never have been opened.

Robert C. Jones
Warrensburg, Mo., June 1982

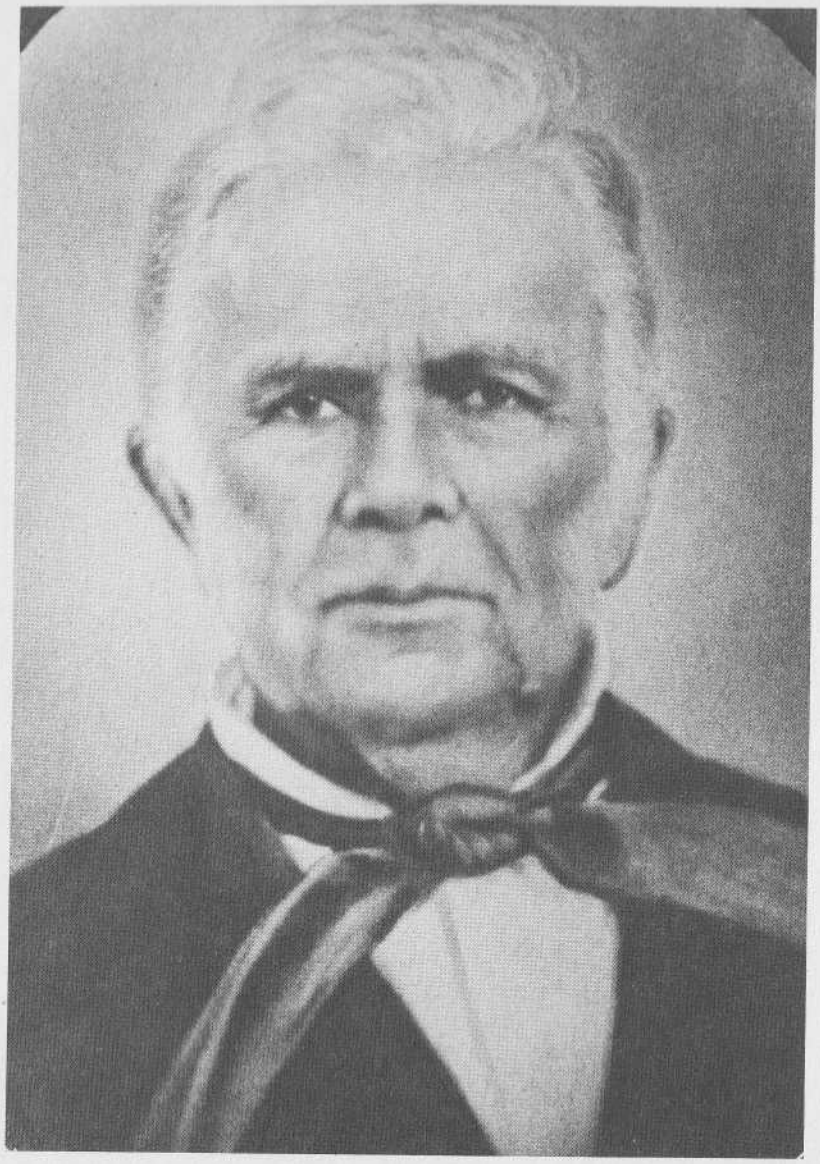


Missouri State Seal

GEORGE FREDERICK BURCKHARTT AND THE ORIGIN OF THE MISSOURI STATE SEAL

CHAPTER I

SEARCH INTO THE PAST



George Frederick Burckhartt

CHAPTER I
SEARCH INTO THE PAST

Among my earliest childhood memories was that of hearing my mother, George Ella Burckhartt Miller, tell about her happy childhood in Randolph County. She told us also of how her grandfather — my great-grandfather George Frederick Burckhartt — who was familiar with the art of heraldry, was asked in 1821, by a select committee of the Missouri House of Representatives, to submit a design for a state seal.[1] Tradition supports the testimony that Burckhartt was the author of the Great Seal of the State. He presented in writing a description of the form the seal should take "in the classic language of the scholar.[2]

From my mother's scrapbook I obtained the clipping taken from the Boonville *Advertiser,* December 7, 1906, in which Dr. Walter Williams, a leading Missouri historian, told of Burckhartt as the designer of the state seal. He referred to the bill approving the design of the seal as the "Burckhartt Law."[3]

In March, 1928, I was granted an interview with Dr. Walter Williams in Columbia. My cousin, Mrs. Besse Bonham Jenner, and a friend Mrs. Stella Thompson, both of Columbia, accompanied me. Our host received us graciously and recalled having written the Burckhartt article. I asked where he had secured this information, and I recall his erect bearing and firm voice as he responded: "Madam, I never wrote an article for publication without having facts to substantiate my statement."[4]

[1]The Select Committee of Three consisted of Chauncey Smith, of St. Charles, and James Alcorn and Elias Elston of Howard County (See *Journal of the House of Representatives, Second Session, First Legislature.)* The Alcorn and Burckhartt families lived together in Fort Kincaid during the War of 1812.

[2]See the Smiser Collection, Heritage Library Archives, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Mo., for genealogical and cultural background compiled by Mrs. Mary L. Markell from Frederick County, Maryland.

[3]This was a reprint from the original article which appeared in the Columbia *Daily Herald,* November 30, 1906. In October, 1919, the *Missouri Historical Review* reprinted the account from the Kansas City *Post.*

[4]See Journals, 1928-1929, in the Smiser Collection. Williams stated that his information came from A. A. Lesseuer, Secretary of State for Missouri, 1888-1900. Lesseuer secured his information from Governor Thomas Reynolds.

George Frederick Burckhartt was a politician and an ardent supporter of the Whig party. He knew Henry Clay in Kentucky before coming to Missouri in 1816. Burckhartt was recognized for his outstanding leadership and his adherance to strong moral principles. During the ante-bellum period, he stood for the preservation of the existing United States government. He was re-elected to the Missouri General Assembly at a time when Whigs were not popular. He had served as a major, during the War of 1812, under General William Henry Harrison, at the battle of Tippecanoe.

Burckhartt's friend, Col. William Switzler (1817-1906), lawyer, historian, politician, and editor of the Columbia, Missouri, *Statesman,* was recognized for his veracity.[5] Both men represented the Whig party in the Missouri General Assembly. Other prominent politicians of this period were William N. Bay[6], Thomas Reynolds and A. A. Lesseuer. Walter Williams, journalist, had many personal contacts with these men and other well-known Missouri journalists, Henry T. Burckhartt, Omar D. Gray, C. F. Ridings,[7] and Wallace Crossley.

In 1904, while attending the World's Fair in St. Louis, Col. Switzler, on seeing that the display of the Missouri State Seal gave credit for its authorship to someone other than Burckhartt, exclaimed, "That is a gross error. Burckhartt designed the state seal." Henry T. Burckhartt and his sister Bettie Burckhartt reported that Col. Switzler personally told them of this incident.[8]

In September, 1928, I visited Floyd C. Shoemaker, secretary of the State Historical Society of Missouri, editor of the *Missouri Historical Review,* and author of several Missouri histories. He seemed pleased and amazed at the amount of material I had gathered concerning Burckhartt and the state seal.[9] He was

[5]See the Switzler Collection, Missouri Historical Society Library, Columbia, Mo.

[6]Bay gave his library and papers to the Missouri Historical Society Library.

[7]Burckhartt, Gray, and Ridings are all great-grandsons of George Frederick Burckhartt.

[8]See the Smiser Collection for letters documenting this incident.

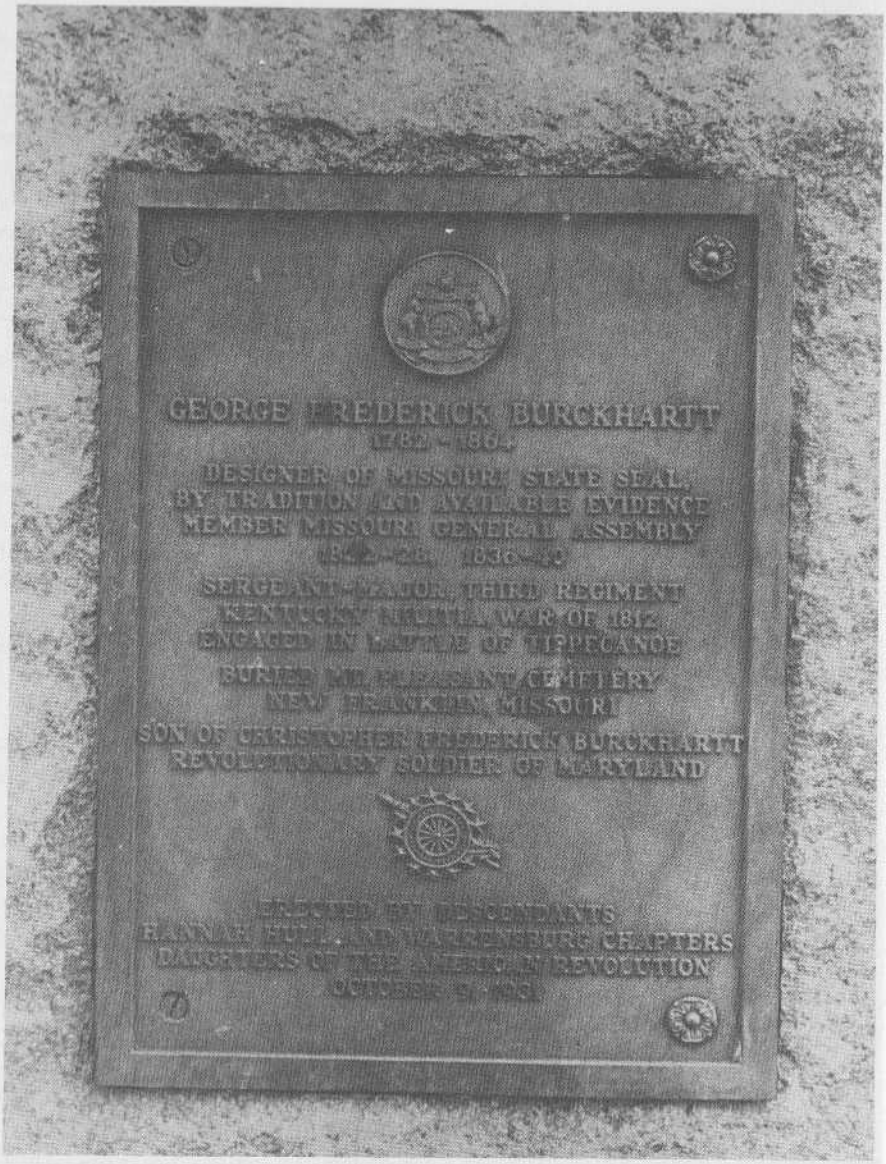
[9]See Journals, 1928-1929, recording over 3,000 miles of travels throughout the state and many interviews with people who had known George Frederick Burckhartt before he died in 1864.

impressed with the testimony of Dr. Williams and others.[10] At this time the Honorable Perry S. Rader, Reporter of the Supreme Court, had written an article on the origin of the state seal which was soon to be published in the *Missouri Historical Review.* Secretary Shoemaker recalled the Rader article not once, but twice, before its publication in the *Review* in order to incorporate Burckhartt research data.[11]

At the request of my family, I published in March, 1929, the brochure, *George Frederick Burckhartt, Designer of the State Seal of Missouri.* This was principally an attempt to preserve the historical material I had gathered.

[10]These included interviews and letters from Dr. C. H. McClure, historian; my cousin Henry T. Burckhartt and Omar D. Gray and C. F. Ridings — each of whom was editor of his own newspaper; Dr. Walter Ryle, historian. The material also established Burckhartt relationships with Duff Green, Switzler, Bay, Lesseuer and Williams, all of whom Shoemaker recognized for their contributions in the making of local and state history. These men had all been leaders in the Boonslick area of Missouri where Burckhartt lived.

[11]Perry S. Rader, "The Great Seal of the State of Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review,* v. 23, January and April, 1929.


GEORGE FREDERICK BURCKHARTT
DESIGNER OF MISSOURI STATE SEAL
BY TRADITION AND AVAILABLE EVIDENCE
MEMBER MISSOURI GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SERGEANT-MAJOR, THIRD REGIMENT
KENTUCKY MILITIA, WAR OF 1812
ENGAGED IN BATTLE OF THAMES
BURIED MT. PLEASANT CEMETERY
NEW FRANKLIN, MISSOURI
SON OF CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK BURCKHARTT
REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIER OF MARYLAND
ERECTED BY DESCENDANTS
DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
OCTOBER 5, 1931

George Frederick Burckhartt Monument,
Fayette, Missouri

CHAPTER II

GEORGE FREDERICK BURCKHARTT: DESIGNER OF THE MISSOURI STATE SEAL

CHAPTER II
GEORGE FREDERICK BURCKHARTT: DESIGNER OF THE MISSOURI STATE SEAL

FOREWORD

The object of the following paper is to give authentic data on the origin of the Missouri State Seal. Many visits were made to the Burckhartt ancestral grounds and to the homes of relatives and friends in Central Missouri, mainly in Howard, Chariton, Randolph, Boone, Saline, Cooper Counties and St. Louis. This paper has been prepared with strict adherence to facts and testimony from reliable sources. Grateful acknowledgement is made to Dr. Walter Williams, Dean of the School of Journalism, University of Missouri, Columbia; Dr. C. H. McClure, Division of Social Science, Northeast State Teachers College, Kirksville; Mr. Floyd C. Shoemaker, Secretary of the State Historical Society of Missouri; Honorable Perry F. Rader, Historian and reporter for the Supreme Court of Missouri, Jefferson City; Henry T. Burckhartt, former editor of the Fayette Advertiser, Fayette, Missouri; Mr. Ward Edwards, Librarian, Central Missouri State Teachers College, Warrensburg; and Walter Ryle, Division of Social Science, Northeast State Teachers College.

The following friends and relatives now living knew George Frederick Burckhartt personally and have given valuable and interesting data on the subject of his designing of the State Seal: Mrs. George Ella Burckhartt Miller, Sumner, his granddaughter; "Uncle Dick" Crews, near Columbia; Mrs. Adelaide Frey, Marshall; Mr. Nicholas B. Jeters, Butler; Mr. Walter Knaus, Springfield; Mr. John Knaus, Knob Noster; Mrs. Levsley, near Moberly; Mrs. Clemmi Walton, Lexington; and the following, all of whom are living in New Franklin: Mrs. Lyda Stewart Herndon, Mr. George Edwards, Mrs. Gus Turner, Mr. N. Taylor Kingsberry, and Mr. John Heath.

I wish to extend thanks to all individuals who gave assistance in compiling data and special thanks to Miss Bettie Burckhartt; Mrs. Besse Bonham Jenner, Columbia; Dr. O. B. Mayes, Centralia; Mr. Omar D. Gray, Sturgeon; Mr. Lilburn Kingsberry, New Franklin; Dr. Joe Billy Taylor, Huntsville; Mr. Charles Elliot, Estil; Mrs. Elizabeth Smiser Schwensen, Warrensburg; Mrs. Mildred Smiser Vyverberg, Gainesville, Fl.; Mr. Samuel Lee Smiser, San Marino, Ca.; Mrs. Elizabeth Miller Carpenter, Mendon; Mr. Frederick B. Miller, Sumner.

Tradition has long credited the designing of the State Seal to George Frederick Burckhartt of Howard County. Recent investigation confirms this. At times, other men have been given the credit of designing the Coat of Arms, but no proof has been furnished to substantiate the claims.

It has been suggested that a committee made the design, but the Seal itself bears evidence of a unity of thought that would preclude such an origin. That the design must have been the work of one individual is the opinion of historians.

Dean Williams' Opinion

Dean Walter Williams of Columbia, Missouri, who has known the Burckhartt family for many years and who has been a lifelong friend of Henry T. Burckhartt of Los Angeles, California, formerly editor of the *Fayette Advertiser,* has this to say in an article published by *The Kansas City Post* and copied by the *Missouri Historical Review,* October, 1919:[1]

> Not many persons know just where Missouri secured her coat of arms or that it was designed in Howard county. When Missouri was admitted into the Union the powers were then required to select a man — "an honest man, a man of great learning" — to get up a device and motto for the state of Missouri. George Frederick Burckhartt was chosen for that work. He was chosen because he was honest, because he was wise, and because he was learned, he being one of the best educated men of our then infant state. Mr. Burckhartt took the matter under advisement, and after spending much time and labor, produced the device of the crescent, the bears, and the bee-hive, with the motto, "Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto." And it was adopted as the official state seal. It has been made into a great seal and the original was supposed to have been lost for years. When Claiborne F. Jackson was governor he issued a proclamation declaring Missouri out of the Union, left the state capital to escape capture by federal troops and took with him the great seal. That was the original, not the facsimile used in the press to stamp public documents. The original seal had been kept under lock and key in the office of the secretary of state. Governor Jackson died in 1862 and was succeeded by Thomas C. Reynolds, then a resident of St. Louis. It was suggested to him that he should return it to the state.
>
> "I will return it," replied the governor, "whenever Missouri

has a governor, legally elected at the polls." No persuasion could move him. When Joseph W. McClung, Republican, was elected governor in 1868, defeating John S. Phelps, the Democratic nominee, Governor Reynolds decided to return the great seal. The seal has been in use ever since.

Recently, when interviewed on the subject, Dean Williams said: "Personally, I think George F. Burckhartt designed the State Seal and should be given credit for the same. My information came from Honorable A. A. Lesseuer, then secretary of state, who in turn secured his information from Governor Reynolds, I was told. The 'Select Committee,' composed of Chauncy Smith, of St. Charles; James Alcorn and Elias Elston, both of Howard County, received the report from George F. Burckhartt, who presented it to the General Assembly, where it was accepted by both Houses. George F. Burckhartt, not the 'Select Committee,' designed the State Seal."[2]

Burckhartt Law

Upon the admission of Missouri into the Union the Constitution provided for a "Seal of State," which should not be subject to change. The *Journals* of the First Session of the General Assembly show that the members of the House and Senate failed repeatedly in their effort to secure a suitable design for a "Seal of State."

When the Second Session convened November 6, 1821, Governor McNair, in reading his message to the General Assembly, said: "Considerable inconvenience daily arises from want of a 'Seal of State' and I deem it proper to remind you of the necessity of supplying the deficiency at the present session."[3]

On reading the *Journals* of the House and Senate for the Second Session of the First General Assembly, which lasted a little over two months, we find the Senate took no part in making provision for a "Seal of State." The whole matter was delegated to the House, in whose hands it soon became a "Howard County responsiblity." The day following the reading of Governor McNair's message, Duff

[1] *Missouri Historical Review*, v. 13, October, 1919.

[2] See the Smiser Collection, Heritage Library Archives, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Mo.

[3] *Journal of the House of Representatives, Second Session, First Legislature.*

Green, representative from Howard County, moved that the part of the governor's message pertaining to a "Seal of State" be referred to a "Select Committee."[4]

According to Dean Walter Williams, the Burckhartt law which established the great seal runs thus:[5]

The device for an armorial achievement for the State of Missouri shall be as follows, to wit: Arms, parted per pale, on the dexter side; gules, the white or grizzly bear of Missouri, passant guardant, proper on a chief engrailed; azure, a crescent argent; on the sinister side, argent, the arms of the United States; the whole with a band inscribed with the words 'United We Stand, Divided We Fall.' For the crest, over a helmet full faced, grated with six bars, or a cloud proper, from which ascends a star, argent, on an azure field, surrounded by a cloud proper. Supporters on each side, a white or grizzly bear of Missouri, rampant, guardant proper, standing on a scroll, inscribed with the motto: 'Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto,' and under the scroll the numerical letters MDCCCXX. And the great seal of the state shall be so engraved as to present by its impression the device of the armorial achievement aforesaid, surrounded by a scroll inscribed with the words, "The Great Seal of Missouri," in Roman capitals; which seal shall be in a circular form, and not more than two and a half inches in diameter.

Former Sec. Lesseuer and Daughter Give Testimony

The Revised Statutes of the state show a correction in the wording of a phrase of heraldry describing an emblem on the seal. This revision was done in 1889, when Honorable A. A. Lesseuer, Secretary of State, was a member of the Revision Committee.

Colonel Lesseuer's daughter, Miss Octavia, of Los Angeles, who assisted her father during the twelve years he was secretary of state, said in a recent interview with Henry T. Burckhartt, Los Angeles, "I have always understood that George Frederick Burckhartt designed the State Seal. The Seal now being used by the several secretaries of the State of Missouri is not the original seal, but is the duplicate. The original seal, a gold-mounted affair, is stored away in a small vault in the Secretary of State's office in Jefferson City."[6] When visiting the Secretary of State's office last summer,

[4]Ibid.

[5]Walter Williams, *Boonville Advertiser*, December 7, 1906.

[6]See the Smiser Collection.

we were shown the original seal to which Miss Lesseuer refers.

From the foregoing, it is very evident that Secretary Lesseuer had firsthand information concerning the authorship of the State Seal, and the records show that he had shown an intelligent interest in heraldry. With such convincing evidence, there can be little doubt in the public mind that his testimony should be accepted as authority in the matter.

The Alcorn family was closely connected with the Burckhartt family, for, during the War of 1812, they lived together in Fort Kincaid near Old Franklin. George F. Burckhartt was a well-educated man of his day and understood the language of heraldry. This the committee knew. They also knew that he was qualified to design a "Seal of State" and asked him to submit a report which was accepted without change, tradition tells us.

Thus far in our research, which covers more than a year's time, we have not learned of anyone other than Burckhartt for whom claim has been made for the authorship of the law which gave Missouri her State Seal. Is it not strangely convincing that this tradition should live for more than a hundred years and still be repeated by people now living in various parts of the state, none of whom knew that others had been solicited for information on the subject? Each testimony apparently has been given from a spirit of patriotism and with all candor. Many of these people were not acquainted, though most of them have at some time lived in Howard, Randolph, or Chariton county and knew George F. Burckhartt personally.

In the fire of 1837, which destroyed the State Capitol Building at Jefferson City, many valuable documentary papers were lost for all time. The records we now have to replace them were restored from memory by members of the General Assembly who had served prior to 1837.

However, from another source we have secured most reliable and authentic data on the subject of the designing of the State Seal. We are giving testimony first from some of those individuals who knew George F. Burckhartt and heard him tell of his giving the interpretation which appeared in an article entitled "Explanation," in the St. Louis *Missouri Gazette* five days after Governor McNair signed the bill which was known as the Burckhartt law. Then we are giving testimony from various historians of the State.

Personal Evidence by Relatives and Friends

There are now living two granddaughters of George Frederick Burckhartt: Mrs. Andrew J. Miller of Sumner, Mo., formerly Miss George Ella Burckhartt of Jacksonville, Missouri: and Mrs. Eugene Jackson of Huntsville, Missouri, formerly Miss Ella Burckhartt.

Mrs. Miller, in conversation with Mr. Floyd Shoemaker, Secretary of the Missouri State Historical Society and the writer said: "I am the youngest daughter of Dr. C. F. Burckhartt, who was an early pioneer of Randolph county, and the granddaughter of George Frederick Burckhartt, who devised the coat of arms for the state of Missouri. My father's house was built of hewn logs of walnut timber. The shingles and weatherboarding were of walnut also, all of which were cut from the land on which he settled. I remember grandfather's visiting us in this old home and how we all sat about the fireplace talking. His presence was so impressive. His head was white and his body slightly bent with the weight of years. I remember distinctly that my father and grandfather talked over the settlements of Randolph county and the adjoining county of Chariton, for grandfather had lived in each county at the time they were organized as counties, all of which territory was originally Howard county. (The old house is still standing and in good condition, near Jacksonville, Mo.)

"Grandfather's intelligence placed him first in political organizations. He was deeply interested in politics and all affairs pertaining to the government. He was a member of the First General Assembly, Second Session, after Missouri was admitted to the Union. I have always cherished the thought that Grandfather was a patriotic citizen of the same caliber as the men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

"I also recall hearing my grandfather and his sons discussing the affairs of the state government in pioneer days. He told us how he was chosen by the 'Select Committee' of the House to submit a design for the State Seal, which he did; how his design was accepted without change; and that it was often spoken of as the Burckhartt law. Many times in later years have I heard Uncle George, the 'Old Judge,' as he was familiarily known, tell of his father devising the coat of arms for Missouri. I am sure this honor came to grandfather because he was a man of superior mentality and intelligence. Throughout his long life he had been a great reader and was blessed with a splendid memory."[7]

[7]Ibid.

Mrs. Ella B. Jackson, the youngest grandchild living, states: "I have often heard my father, Judge George H. Burckhartt, tell of his father, Judge George F. Burckhartt, designing the State Seal. This statement I have often heard repeated all of my life by the older men and women of Randolph county who knew the family."[8]

Mrs. Betty Burckhartt Talbot of Fayette, great niece of George F. Burckhartt, recently told me that her cousin, the late Judge George H. Burckhartt, of Huntsville, son of George F. Burckhartt, had said many times: "Betty, you will in the future hear it denied that your Uncle George, my father, designed the Missouri State Seal," the Judge said, "my father has told me many times why he suggested the emblems and devices found on the State Seal, and of his report being accepted by the General Assembly." Mrs. Talbot said further: "The Judge was so in earnest. I recall clearly the expression on his face as he repeated the part his father had taken in designing the state seal. I have heard the Judge and my father, C. E. Burckhartt, speak of Uncle George's strong mind and wonderful intelligence, all of which produced a remarkable impression on my youthful mind, and made me happy to know that he was my uncle."[9]

In central Missouri there are many men and women living today who knew Judge George H. Burckhartt when he was circuit judge of the Second District, now Ninth District, which composed the counties of Calloway, Boone, Howard, and Randolph. This office he held for twenty-eight years. Honorable North Todd Gentry of Columbia, Missouri, a former judge of the Supreme Court said: "I was admitted to the bar under Judge Burckhartt. His word has always been accepted as authority. In 1881, Judge Burckhartt was called to St. Louis to try one of the noted murder cases of Missouri vs. Kring. In this case he distinguished himself as a trial judge and attracted the attention of the entire state. Judge Burckhartt was the first judge from a county circuit to be called to St. Louis to hold court; and his eminent fairness and ability came near making him judge of the Supreme Court."[10]

Mrs. Mattie Pitts Burckhartt of Huntsville, whose husband was Dorsey Burckhartt, son of the late Judge, said: "We visited frequently at the Judge's home. He was fond of people and often

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

entertained great crowds, young and old, with his reminiscences and jokes. I have heard him tell how his father originated the design for the state seal and of his interpretation of the emblems thereon. He was vitally interested in the welfare of the county and state and served both in office. Being a man of high mentality and well-informed, he was constantly being called upon for information on the various questions of the day. By his friends and politicians he was called "The Walking Encyclopedia of the West."[11]

W. T. Dameron, long a resident of Huntsville, Missouri, who served as a Randolph County official for many years said: "I have heard old settlers of Randolph County say that George F. Burckhartt was the designer of the State Seal of Missouri. This is generally understood to be a fact. I have never heard it disputed and have never read any historical fact to the contrary. He was a very intelligent man. I have heard my father speak of him many times as being a fine man and a popular citizen. Of course I was well acquainted with his son, George H. Burckhartt."[12]

Bettie C. Burckhartt, daughter of the late Mathias Nicholas Burckhartt of Fayette, quotes her father, who was a nephew of George Frederick Burckhartt, with whom he was closely associated for more than forty years, in these words: "Three men were selected by the House committee to present designs for the proposed State Seal, each one expressing his own idea of what the State Seal should be. The House committee was to choose one design from those submitted, or reject all. The Seal of State as it now stands is exactly as Uncle George designed it. However, there existed much feeling and envy, and men of the day refused to give Uncle George credit for the work."[13]

Mrs. Lydia Stewart Herndon of New Franklin, on June 11, 1928, had this to say concerning George Frederick Burckhartt: "I boarded in his home and attended the seminary in New Franklin. My mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Stewart, were happy to have me fall into the hands of such dear, good people when away from home at school. Uncle George was considered by everybody to be such a distinguished, intelligent, fine old gentleman, the very best educated man in our community. He had been a teacher in the Seminary. He took great pleasure in assisting me in my work. Especially did I find him helpful in Natural Philosophy, which was

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

my hardest study. Aunt Sally and Uncle George were both consistent, happy Christians, and members of the Southern Methodist church. I shall always remember his many kindnesses to me."[14]

Mr. Walter C. Knaus, of the Springfield Security Company, of Springfield, Missouri, formerly of the Howard County Court, a venerable gentleman of the old school, who is now in his eighty-sixth year, writes in a very positive way of Burckhartt's designing the State Seal: "Yes, beyond all doubt, Burckhartt was the designer of the Missouri State Seal. He was asked by the 'Select Committee' of the Legislature to originate a design for the seal. I remember well hearing him tell my father all about it. He asked for time in which to give due consideration to the matter, and when he reported at the end of the year, the seal was accepted without change. Many times 'from way back' the historic event has appeared in public print. He was a man of learning of very general, even wide intelligence. His character commanded universal respect; a kindlier man none of us knew. I recall a conversation I heard between 'Uncle George,' as he was called in the little town of New Franklin, and my father, which is very clear in my mind. In that conversation Uncle George, whose statements never got tangled over anything, positively told my father, who was interested and desired assurance, that he, Uncle George, was the designer of the State Seal. There was not one bit of question in the community as to who was the designer of the State Seal."[15]

Opinions of State Historians

A recent letter from Honorable Perry S. Rader states that he knew Mr. Knaus well when he lived in Fayette, and believes his letter another persuasive argument for the claim that George Frederick Burckhartt was the designer of the Great Seal. Mr. Rader further writes: "It is certain that the law presenting the emblems and devices was not framed by members of either house. Many things indicate that Mr. Burckhartt did understand the language of heraldry and there is the persistent tradition that he was 'the designer of the seal.' The *Journal* records indicate that Chauncy Smith reported the bill in the house December 31, 1821. However

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

Smith did not frame the bill, neither did Alcorn; neither did Elston."[16]

Since George F. Burckhartt was not a member of either house at the time the seal was designed, Mr. Rader's statement gives added strength to the claim that Burckhartt was the designer.

During the St. Louis World's Fair, which was held in 1904, on the one hundredth anniversary of the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, there was on display in the Missouri Historical Exhibit the original State Seal. At this time the credit for designing of the State Seal was given to someone other than George F. Burckhartt. This error was noted by the late Colonel W. F. Switzler of Columbia, Mo. Colonel Switzler exclaimed very emphatically to Henry T. Burckhartt, a great nephew, then on the *Columbia Statesman,* "Such a statement is a gross error; George F. Burckhartt designed the Missouri State Seal."[17]

Dr. C. H. McClure, head of Division of Social Science, Kirksville Teachers College, on March 16, 1929, gave out the following signed statement: "I have examined the manuscripts and data in possession of Mrs. Mary Miller Smiser and am convinced that George F. Burckhartt was the designer of the State Seal."[18]

The "Explanation"

The "Explanation" which follows appeared in the *Missouri Gazette,* January 16, 1822, five days after the passing of the Burckhartt law and no doubt was written by George F. Burckhartt, who designed the seal. Like Thomas H. Benton, Burckhartt believed in the Union and that it must be preserved. Such a belief is in harmony with the sentiment as expressed in the article "Explanation." It does not seem that it would have been difficult for the one who originated the design for the state seal to have written "Explanation," which is only an interpretation of the symbolism found thereon. Indeed the two are so closely connected it seems that it could not have been otherwise. By many the coat of arms is considered a fancy picture, but to those who know of the origin of the coat-of-arms it possesses a deep and profound

[16]Ibid. For more discussion on this subject, see *Missouri Historical Review,* v. 23, April 1929, pp. 457-460.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

meaning, significantly expressed in appropriate heraldic language![19]

"The arms of the state of Missouri and of the United States, yet separated by a pale, denote the connection existing between the two governments, and show that, although connected by a compact, yet we are independent as to internal concerns; the words surrounding the shield denote the necessity of the Union. Quadruped are the most honorable bearings. The great grizzly bear being almost peculiar to the Missouri River and its tributaries, and remarkable for its prodigious size, strength, and courage, is borne as the principal charge on our shield. The color of the shield is red, and denotes hardiness and valor. The chief is most honorable of all ordinaries. The color blue signifies vigilance, perseverance and justice. The crescent in heraldry is borne on the shield by the second son, and on our shield denotes that we are the second state (Louisiana being the first) formed out of the territory not within the original territorial limits of the United States and admitted into the Union. The crescent also denotes the growing situation of this state as to its inhabitants, wealth, power, etc. The color white signifies purity and innocence. The helmet indicates enterprise and hardihood. The one blazoned on this coat of arms is that assigned to sovereigns only. The star ascending from a cloud to join the constellation shows Missouri surmounting her difficulties and taking her rank among the other states of the Union. The supporters, the same powerful animals, borne on the shield, which support the shield, on which are emblazoned the arms of the state and of the United States, denote, that while we support ourselves by our own internal strength we are also in support of the general government. The motto shows that the good of the people is the supreme law of the state. The numerals under the scroll show the date of the constitution."

Sketch of Burckhartt's Life

George Frederick Burckhartt was born in Fredericktown, Maryland, in 1782. (He was at the time of his death eighty-two years old.) He immigrated to Kentucky with his father, Christopher Frederick Burckhartt, who was a soldier of the Revolutionary War. His grandparents came from Rhenish Germany. His mother was Elizabeth Hobbs of Maryland.

[19] *Missouri Gazette,* January 16, 1822.

George Frederick Burckhartt was married to Ruth Dorsey in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, 1803. She came from an old and highly respected family of Maryland. In 1816 George Frederick Burckhartt came with his family to Missouri from Louisville, Kentucky, on a keel-boat, landing on the spot where the town of Chariton was located the next year by Duff Green. Green became the first postmaster of the new town, and soon he established the first mail-stage line west of the Mississippi. George F. Burckhartt was made the first Justice of the Peace of the county. His handwriting is plainly readable today on the Chariton County records at Keytesville, Mo., and those of Howard County at Fayette, Mo., as far back as 1818. Duff Green became a very influential man and rapidly rose to national prominence in the United States Congress. He and George F. Burckhartt remained lifelong friends, serving together in the early sessions of the General Assembly in Missouri. Duff Green was instrumental in securing the services of George F. Burckhartt for the designing of the Missouri State Seal.

In 1816, the year George Frederick Burckhartt arrived in Missouri, his brother Nicholas Sellman was appointed Sheriff of Howard County - which at that time comprised a third of the area of the State. In 1820 Nicholas Sellman Burckhartt was chosen as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention and later served in the General Assembly as a Representative and as Senator from Howard County.

The brothers were very popular and influential citizens of Howard county. George F. Burckhartt was elected to the Second Gen. Assembly from Howard Co. He served five terms as Representative in the General Assembly, representing Chariton and Randolph counties which had been carved from Howard Co. During Missouri's territorial period of statehood, which was a decade of personal politics, the man rather than the party was the first consideration of the voters.

George F. Burckhartt was a lifelong Whig, and a staunch supporter of his party. William R. Samuel writing in the *Huntsville Herald* in 1864 said: "It was no empty compliment in those days for a Whig as Burckhartt ever was, an uncompromising one to the day of his death, to be elected to positions of honor and trust. In those days the Whig party in Randolph county, as indeed it was in the whole state, was in a woeful minority, but it was well known he would discharge his duty to his country and state. His strong common sense, his large fund of acquired knowledge, much from books but more from men, his social and moral qualities, his rich

and unfailing fund of pure original anecdotes gave him an enviable standing in the country."[20]

The Whigs, who numbered among their party some of the most able men in the state, followed Henry Clay, and favored the United States Bank and the Protective tariff. The Whig party was strongest in St. Louis county, among the banks and merchants, and among the big slave owners in the river-slave counties. The Burckhartts were large land owners and held many slaves. William Henry Harrison was the only Whig to be elected President of the United States. George F. Burckhartt knew William Henry Harrison personally, having served under him during the War of 1812, as Sergeant Major in the Third Kentucky Militia.

George F. Burckhartt, imbued with the patriotism of his Revolutionary sire, followed General Harrison, as a member of the Kentucky Volunteers from the gloomy shades of melancholy River Raisue to the culminating triumph of the Battle of Tippecanoe in Indiana. The fighting along the northwestern frontiers with the English soldiery and their savage allies with tomahawk and scalping knife, was bloody and fierce.

George F. Burckhartt, being in the prime of life and patriotic to the core, took an active part in the affairs of the government both in Kentucky and Missouri. It is thought by many that he suggested the motto "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," which he incorporated in the design for the Missouri State Seal. This fact is significant since Kentucky is the only other state in the Union whose seal bears the same motto.

George Frederick Burckhartt died March 24, 1864, at his home in New Franklin, Howard county. He had returned ten years before from Randolph County to the county in which he had first lived on coming to Missouri nearly fifty years before. He and his wife, Ruth Dorsey, were buried near Moberly in the Burckhartt burying ground.

Arrangements were made by Mrs. George Ella Burckhartt Miller to have the remains removed to Howard county; interment was made in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, near New Franklin, where many members of the Burckhartt family are buried. Mount Pleasant Cemetery is said to be the oldest Protestant cemetery west of St. Louis.

[20]William R. Samuel, *Huntsville Herald*, 1864.

Proof Too Strong to Deny

The origin of the Missouri State Seal should be a matter of historic interest to all citizens of the state. The authorship of the State Seal has long been a moot question. Opinions have been advanced by many and conjectures made by some historians.

We have now proved conclusively that George F. Burckhartt designed the State Seal. This proof falls into two classes:

1. Personal evidence as given by Mrs. George Ella Burckhartt Miller, granddaughter; Mrs. Betty Talbot, Miss Bettie Burckhartt, great nieces; other relatives named in the article; by personal friends, Mr. Walter C. Knaus and W. T. Dameron; and the written statements of men like Dean Walter Williams, Dr. C. H. McClure and Hon. Perry S. Rader.

2. Circumstantial evidence, adduced as follows:

A. We know the state seal was designed by a man of learning, someone outside the General Assembly.

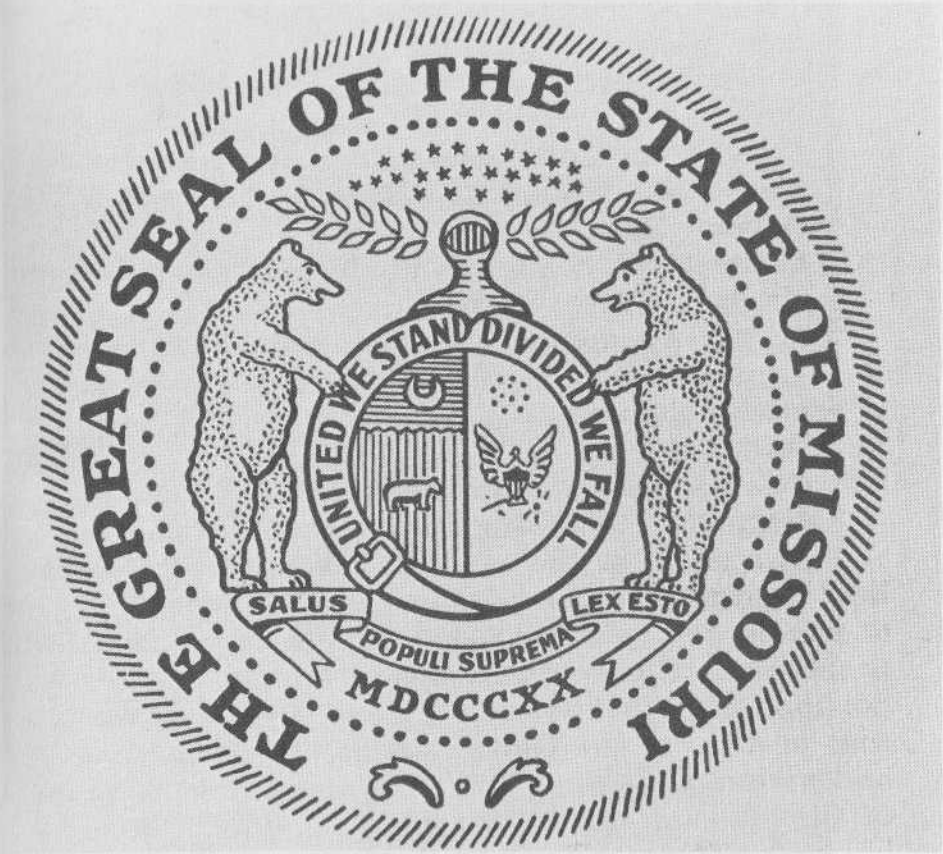
B. We know that Duff Green, both a member of the First General Assembly and a member of the Select Committee, was a personal friend of George Frederick Burckhartt, well acquainted with Burckhartt's learning and abilities.

C. Both general conviction of relatives, friends, and contemporaries and testimony of relatives, friends, and contemporaries suggest that George Frederick Burckhartt was the man asked by the Select Committee to design the state seal.

Missouri state history, as we all know, is yet an unfinished document. Each year many interesting experiences are being recorded which serve to link up various incidents in such an authentic manner that the facts narrated become history of the most reliable sort. "When traditions are found that are vibrant after more than one hundred years have passed and there are those persons living who can substantiate the evidence, the same must be accepted . . ."[21]

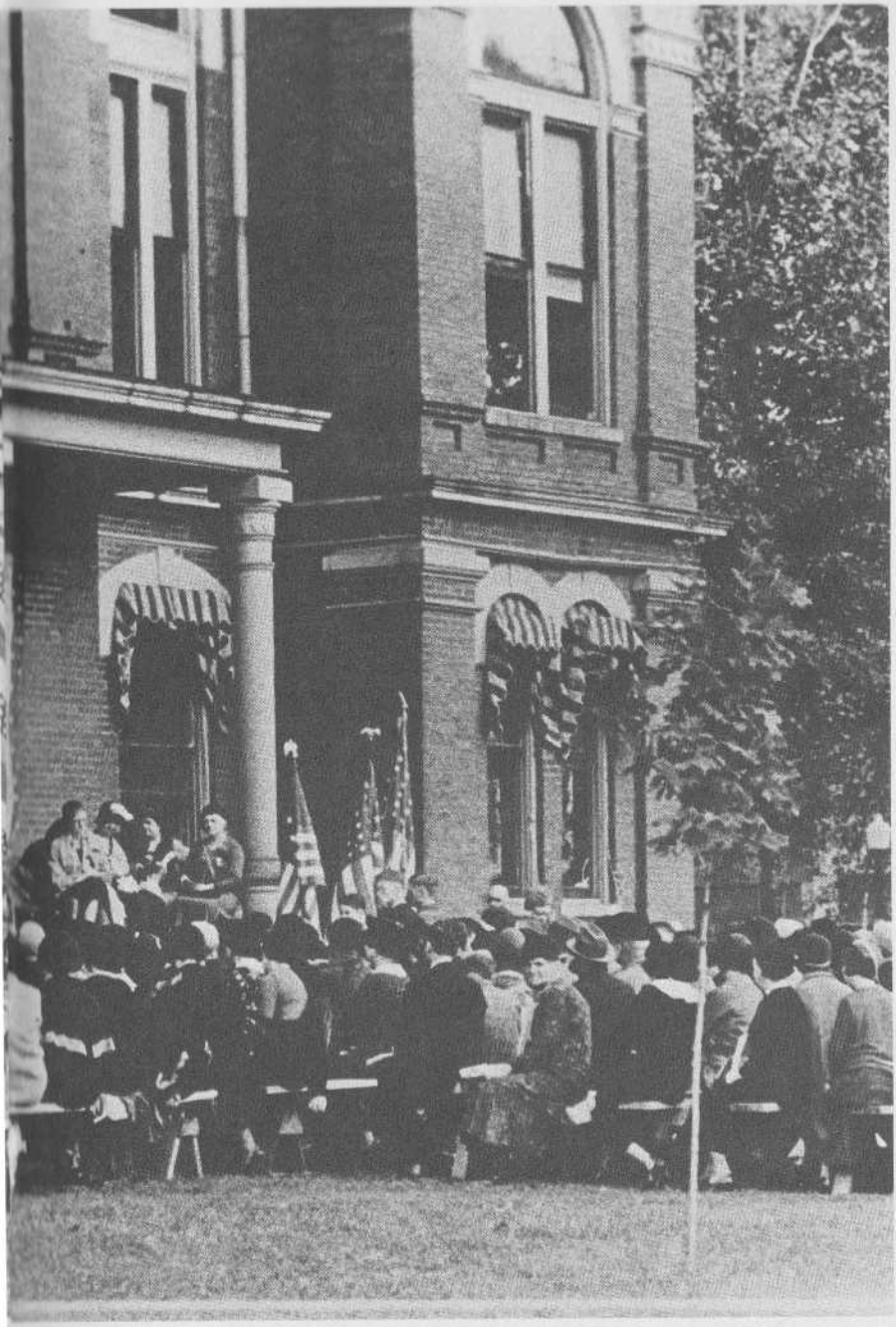
The integrity of those who have given testimony and of those who have stated beliefs is beyond question. Such evidence is convincing and cannot be refuted; all of which gives confidence in the belief that George Frederick Burckhartt was the designer of the Missouri State Seal.

[21]C. H. McClure, "The Case for George Frederick Burckhartt as Designer of the Great Seal of Missouri," manuscript. Smiser Collection.



Missouri State Seal

Dedication of Memorial at Courthouse,



Fayette, Missouri

CHAPTER III
CONTROVERSY AND HISTORY

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CONTROVERSY AND HISTORY

I received numerous letters of commendation on my brochure. Dr. Walter Williams wrote, on June 25, 1929, "It is a real contribution to the history of our state."[1]

Floyd Shoemaker, in thanking me for the copy sent to the State Historical Society, said: "I congratulate you on having collected the data you have assembled in your work."[2]

Another letter was received from Perry Rader, who wrote: "You deserve much praise for thus collecting and preserving the much {sic} data you have collected concerning Mr. Burckhartt."[3]

Writing from George Peabody College, where he was completing his doctorate, Walter Ryle said, "I think you have done a valuable piece of work. It has strengthened my belief in the fact that Burckhartt was the designer of the state seal."[4]

Dr. C. H. McClure was impressed with the data in my brochure and requested an interview to examine the material I had collected. In August, 1930, he came to my home, accompanied by Dr. Ryle. Dr. McClure volunteered to prepare a documented article using my research. He said, "I have been requested by the editor of the *Missouri Historical Review* to prepare a paper for publication and this subject appeals to me."[5]

In the meantime, excerpts from my brochure had appeared in the *Missouri Historical Review*.[6] In October, 1929, I was asked to speak on the Missouri State Seal, and George Frederick Burckhartt as its designer, before the state convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Kirksville. After my talk, Mrs. Georgiana Dolan of Hannibal, Missouri, approached me with an air of excitement. She recounted with enthusiasm that she had written a paper on the subject of Burckhartt and the seal while a student at Watson Seminary in Ashley, Pike County, in 1878. "I recognized

[1]See the Smiser Collection, Heritage Library Archives, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Mo.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]*Missouri Historical Review*, v. 23, July, 1929; v. 4, October, 1929.

the picture of George Frederick Burckhartt and I am familiar with the fact that he was the designer of the state seal," she affirmed.[7]

The Warrensburg and Hannah Hull Chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the James Kearney Chapter of the United States Daughters of 1812 jointly planned for the erection of a monument honoring Burckhartt as the designer of the Missouri State Seal. On a pleasant autumn afternoon, October 9, 1931, a bronze plaque honoring Burckhartt was dedicated on the courthouse grounds at Fayette, Howard County, Missouri. Invitations were sent to many noted state figures and the occasion attracted a great deal of attention from the metropolitan presses. The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* and the Kansas City *Star* sent reporters and photographers. The Kemper Military Academy band was present. Various dignitaries attended, along with Burckhartt descendants, relatives and friends.[8]

Dr. Walter Ryle read a paper on the "Life of George Frederick Burckhartt." Dr. C. H. McClure was to have been the principal speaker and to have presented his paper, "The Case of George Frederick Burckhartt, Designer of the Missouri State Seal." However, Dr. McClure was unable to attend the ceremony because of illness and the paper was read by his daughter, Mildred McClure. Due to the already long program, Dr. McClure's paper was not read in its entirety.[9]

In arguing that George Frederick Burckhartt be credited as the designer of the state seal, Dr. McClure made telling use of the support of tradition. The tradition, Dr. McClure noted, is "That George Frederick Burckhartt, of Howard County, was asked to design a seal for the state of Missouri. Some versions have it asked by the legislature, others that he was asked by a select committee and still others that he was asked to design the seal without stating by whom he was asked ... Some versions say that he asked for and was granted a year; that it was arranged for him to have the necessary time; that he designed the seal (that is, wrote the bill describing the emblems and devices of the great seal); that it was introduced in the House and passed both the House and Senate

[7]See the Smiser Collection. On October 15, 1930, Mrs. Dolan signed an affidavit confirming this. She cited a history or gazetteer she had used and that I have conducted a prolonged search for, but have been unable to locate.

[8]See the Smiser Collection for newspaper articles and pictures. Floyd C. Shoemaker was sent an invitation to attend the dedication. His name was inadvertently left off the program. He did not attend.

[9]See the Smiser Collection.

just as Burckhartt wrote it . . . The stories as told by different people do not agree in detail but they do agree in essentials. Disagreements, variations, and errors in details and non-essentials are the strongest proof of the truth of a tradition."[10]

On February 13, 1933, the Missouri State Senate passed a resolution acknowledging George Frederick Burckhartt as the designer of the Great Seal of the state of Missouri.[11]

Later that year, while on a visit to the State Historical Library, I spoke with Roy T. King, who was then in charge of the newspaper department of the library. It was during our conversation that I learned from Mr. King that he had prepared an article arguing that Robert W. Wells was the designer of the Missouri State Seal. He said the article was to be published soon in the *Missouri Historical Review.*

I inquired, "How soon?"

"When the time is right," he replied.[12]

In October, 1935, Dr. Walter Williams died.[13] The January, 1936, issue of the *Missouri Historical Review* included Mr. King's article, "Robert Williams Wells, Jurist, Public Servant, and Designer of the Missouri State Seal."[14] Thus was precipitated a controversy over the authorship for the design of the state seal.

My own response to Mr. King's article was a reinvigorated attempt to substantiate the validity of the Burckhartt claim. The discerning public is interested only with happenings in Robert W. Wells's life up to January 11, 1822, the date of the acceptance of the seal by the state legislature. King's article in the *Review* was more concerned with Wells's career after 1822. Judge William Bay wrote that Wells's only formal education was in a common field school and that Wells did not have a liberal education.[15] In

[10] *Ibid.* Floyd Shoemaker had previously requested an article from McClure to be published in the *Missouri Historical Review.* When McClure submitted his article on Burckhartt and the state seal, it was rejected. McClure, at this time, was on the Board of Trustees of the Society and later became a vice-president of the Society.

[11] Kansas City *Star,* February 14, 1933.

[12] See the Smiser Collection.

[13] Three years of waiting elapsed; the King article was published in the *Review* immediately after the death of Dr. Walter Williams. Dr. Williams and Shoemaker were friends of long standing and cooperated in trying to preserve state and local history of Missouri. They collaborated in the publication of *Missouri, Mother of the West.*

[14] *Missouri Historical Review,* v. 30, no. 2, January 1936.

[15] William N. Bay, *Reminiscences of the Bench and Bar of Missouri,* St. Louis, 1878. Also contains many first-hand references to the Burckhartt family, from George F. Burckhartt to Judge George H. Burckhartt.

1822, Wells was 26. He had worked as a surveyor when he came to Missouri.

I assembled the material I had been accumulating over the years and wrote a lengthy article which was subsequently published in the March 27, 1936, *Daily Star-Journal* of Warrensburg, in Johnson County, Missouri, and by the St. Louis Law Printing Company, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1937.[16]

[16]See the Smiser Collection.

CHAPTER IV

TO SUBSTANTIATE THE BURCKHARTT CLAIM TO THE HONOR OF THE DESIGNING OF THE STATE SEAL OF MISSOURI

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TO SUBSTANTIATE THE BURCKHARTT CLAIM TO THE HONOR OF THE DESIGNING OF THE STATE SEAL OF MISSOURI

FOREWORD

The following article was written in reply to the Roy T. King article advancing the case of Robert W. Wells as the author and designer of the Missouri State Seal. This article precipitated a controversy as to the authorship of the state seal for which, heretofore, George Frederick Burckhartt had been given credit.

In the *Missouri Historical Review* for January, 1936, there appeared an article written by Mr. Roy T. King, of the staff of the State Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri, entitled "Robert William Wells, Jurist, Public Servant, and Designer of the Missouri State Seal." Mr. King's article has advanced the case of Judge Wells as the author and designer of the Missouri State Seal. It has precipitated a controversy as to the authorship of the Seal, as heretofore George Frederick Burckhartt had been credited with this achievement. Mr. King bases his contention in support of Judge Wells solely upon a letter written by him, dated March 11, 1847, and addressed to F. H. Martin, Secretary of the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society, and published in the Jefferson City *Metropolitan* on March 23, 1847. The purpose of Mr. Wells' letter, as he stated, was to make reply to Edward Bates, who had delivered an address concerning the motto "Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto." It was not his primary purpose to claim the authorship of the coat-of-arms, but merely to reply to Bates, as one who knew its significance. The interpretation given to the letter by Mr. King that the seal bill was drafted and adopted pursuant to the explanation and diagram furnished by Mr. Wells is certainly not supported by the records of the Legislature.

Quoting from the Wells letter (as found in the King article), which was written twenty-five years after the adoption of the State Seal, Mr. Wells says:

"*** as I am the author or the original suggestor of our 'coat-of arms,' *** I then drew up a description of an 'armorial achievement' and of 'emblems and devices' for the Great Seal."

Mr. Wells, having served as deputy surveyor, no doubt had knowledge of draftsmanship, which qualified him for this work. He may have been asked by the chairman of the "Select Committee," Chauncey Smith of St. Charles County, to draw up a design corresponding to the "Burckhartt Law." If so, this would have given Wells ample ground for the above statement. The claim as made for Burckhartt is that he was the author of the bill introduced in the Legislature December 31, 1821; not that he was the drafter or designer of the "emblems and devices" which appear on the Seal.

Mr. King gives no evidence in support of the Wells case, except the letter written by Judge Wells. What proof has he that Wells actually wrote the letter? Had the letter been given wide circulation in 1847, at the time of publication, it is certain that it would have drawn fire, for it was generally understood in Central Missouri that the author of the Seal bill was George Frederick Burckhartt. He was living at that time and was a candidate for the State Legislature as late as 1858, having been induced by his party to become a candidate, and was beaten by only sixteen votes.

In 1878 Judge W. V. N. Bay published *The Bench and Bar of Missouri,* in which was a biography of Robert W. Wells. He states:

"The impression that Wells' education was classic and thorough seems to have been generally entertained, but the contrary is true, for the only school he ever attended was an ordinary common field school, such as prevailed at that early date throughout the Old Dominion. None but the wealthy planters and gentlemen of fortune were able to send their sons to college, and as Richard Wells did not fall within either of these classes, he was forced from necessity to deny his son the benefits of a liberal education, but he instilled in his young mind the necessity of self-exertion, and encouraged him by pointing to the brilliant career of many self-made men. *** With the assistance of such translations of ancient authors as fell in his way, he acquired a fair knowledge of the Classics."[1]

[1]William N. Bay, *Reminiscences of the Bench and Bar of Missouri,* St. Louis, F. H. Thomas & Co., 1878

Mr. Bay further states that Wells, at the age of 19 or 20, began the study of law with Judge Vinton, Marietta, Ohio. After nearly a year's time had elapsed, he gave up his study and came to Missouri, where he again took up his old occupation of surveying, in order to earn money to continue his studies. "Upon the admission of the State into the Union, he was appointed Prosecuting Attorney in the St. Charles Circuit, embracing St. Charles, Lincoln, Pike, Ralls, and other counties ***."[2]

It is apparent from this biography written by Judge Bay that he was well acquainted with Judge Wells and that he was on intimate terms with him and we can be fairly certain that Robert W. Wells did not attain any great mastery of the classics and classical languages, especially until after the adoption of the Missouri State Seal by the Legislature on January 11, 1822. There is nothing to indicate in 1822, when Wells was but 26 years of age, that he was in a position to be called on to draft the legislation adopting the Seal of State, or that he had training in heraldry which would qualify him for this work. It seems that had he been credited with the authorship of the Seal bill, Judge Bay would have mentioned this fact.

Judge Wells in his letter states that on the 1st of January, 1822, the General Assembly had been unable to agree upon a seal. He states that after that date he drew up a description of an "armorial achievement" and submitted it to members of the Assembly, accompanied by an explanation. We know that the bill, which was finally passed by the Legislature, was introduced in the Assembly on December 31, 1821, by Chauncey Smith of St. Charles County, who had been appointed for that purpose in November of 1821.[3] This bill was referred to the committee on the whole by Mr. Smith on that day.[4] It was taken up by the committee of the whole on January 8th and favorably reported to the House. On January 9th it was read for the third time and passed.[5] It was passed by the Senate on the same day.[6] The bill was signed by the Governor on January 11th. In view of this record, then, it is clear that the Seal

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Journal of the House of Representatives, Second Session, First Legislature,* p. 150.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 186.

[6] *Senate Journal, First Legislature, Second Session,* p. 174.

bill, which finally passed the Legislature, was introduced before the 1st day of January, 1822, and that if Mr. Wells sent his diagrams to the Legislature after that date, as he states in his letter that he did, these diagrams were merely illustrative of the bill which was introduced on December 31, 1821.

The case for George Frederick Burckhartt has been admirably set forth by Dr. C. H. McClure of the faculty of the State Teachers College of Kirksville, an authority on the history of the Missouri Territorial Period.[7]

George Frederick Burckhartt was born on October 4, 1782, in Fredericktown, Maryland. The Burckhartt family was highly respected in Maryland and was distinguished by its cultural and educational attainments. George Frederick Burckhartt became a school-teacher in early manhood and we know that he was scholarly and interested in the classics and classical languages. He came from a family that was interested in heraldry and he had ample opportunity to become familiar with the principles of that art. It is well known that during the period in Maryland, which was the land of the Gentleman Farmer, much interest was shown in heraldry. The Burckhartt family history shows that this family had a special interest in heraldry and their own coat of arms. This family trait was carried on by the son of George Frederick Burckhartt, Judge George Hobbs Burckhartt, who designed the Seal for the Circuit Court of Randolph County, Missouri.

On September 14, 1831, Mrs. Frances Markell, a genealogist, of Frederick, Maryland, wrote to Mrs. Mary Miller Smiser as follows:[8]

> "After going into the Burckhartt family and reading the different records they left, I am satisfied they were people of education. Not one deed did I read that was not signed in script. Many records were signed with a mark; not so with the Burckhartts. I read seventy deeds."

George Frederick Burckhartt was 40 years of age at the time of the adoption of the seal. There is no question but that he was fitted by education and background for this work. He served in the War of 1812, as Sergeant Major, Third Regiment, Kentucky Militia. In 1816 he came with his family to Missouri from Kentucky, where he had lived since 1795, having immigrated to

[7]C. H. McClure, "The Case for George Frederick Burckhartt as Designer of the Great Seal of Missouri," *Fayette Advertiser,* Fayette, Missouri, October 13, 1931.

[8]See the Smiser Collection, Heritage Library Archives, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Mo.

Kentucky from Maryland with his father, Christopher Frederick Burckhartt, who had been a soldier in the Revolutionary War, serving as an interpreter for Washington at the Battle of Trenton. George Frederick Burckhartt was married to Ruth Dorsey, 1803, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, a descendant of the old and highly respected Edward Dorsey family who came to America in 1636. The Burckhartt family came to Missouri in a keel boat, landing in 1816 on the spot where the Town of Chariton was located by Duff Green. George Frederick Burckhartt was made the first Justice of the Peace at the Town of Chariton. Today his handwriting is plainly readable on the Chariton County records at Keytesville and those of Howard County at Fayette, as far back as 1818.

Duff Green became a very influential man and he and George Frederick Burckhartt were lifelong friends. They served together in early sessions of the General Assembly and it is believed that Green was instrumental in securing the services of George Frederick Burckhartt for the designing of the Missouri State Seal, although Burckhartt was not a member of the Legislature until after the adoption of the Seal. Duff Green was a member of the first Legislature in which Governor McNair, in his message, recommended the adoption of a seal. Duff Green on November 4, 1821, introduced a resolution that "So much of said message as related to a seal of state be referred to a select committee." This resolution was passed and the committee was appointed the next day. The members of this committee were Chauncey Smith of St. Charles County, James Alcorn and Elias Elston, both of Howard County.[9]

The Alcorn family was closely connected with the Burckhartt family, they having, during the War of 1812, lived together at Fort Kincaid, near Old Franklin. Christopher Frederick Burckhartt, father of George Frederick Burckhartt, had settled in Missouri in St. Louis County in 1809. He and his family moved into the Boonslick country in 1811. Nicholas Sellman Burckhartt, a younger brother of George Frederick, who lived in the forts during the War of 1812, was well acquainted with the Alcorn family also. Nicholas Sellman Burckhartt was made the first Sheriff of Howard County in 1816. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention, 1820, and served continuously in all sessions of the General Assembly until the day of his death in 1834, first as Representative and later as Senator. It is a significant fact that he was a member of the

[9] *Journal of the House of Representatives, Second Session, First Legislature.*

House at the time the State Seal was adopted, and no doubt recommended his brother for the service which he rendered in submitting the design for the State Seal, which, as has been stated, was accepted.

As was stated above, George Frederick Burckhartt did not come to Missouri until 1816, after the conclusion of the War of 1812. However, if these two families were closely connected and had lived together and suffered the hardships of the pioneer conditions of Territorial Missouri, it is safe to conclude that James Alcorn and George Frederick Burckhartt were close friends. It is highly reasonable to suppose that Alcorn was aware of the fact that Burckhartt was a well educated and scholarly man. Considering the influence of Duff Green in the first session of the Legislature and his interest in the designing of the State Seal, as indicated above, it is reasonable to think that he used his influence upon the members of the "Select Committee" to secure the services of George Frederick Burckhartt in designing the Seal. (It is known that some one not a member of the Legislature was the author of the Seal Bill.)

In view of the tradition that has prevailed in Central Missouri, all the years since the adoption of the Seal, to the effect that George Frederick Burckhartt was the author of the act of adopting the Seal, it is probable that the two members of the "select committee" from Howard County, who were neighbors and friends of Mr. Burckhartt and Duff Green, who was a close friend of Burckhartt and one of the three most influential members of the first Legislature[10], prevailed upon Mr. Burckhartt to lend his services in designing the Seal.

The late Walter Williams wrote as follows:[11]

> "George Frederick Burckhartt, then of Howard County, mother of Missouri counties, was the designer of the coat-of-arms of Missouri. Thus the tradition runs in Howard County ***.
>
> "*** Burckhartt was of high intelligence and liberal education and the suggestions of the coat-of-arms, the State Seal, came from him. *** The Burckhartt Law, which established the Great Seal, runs thus ***.

[10]Perry S. Rader, "The Great Seal of the State of Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review,* v. 23, January and April, 1929.

[11]Walter Williams, *Fayette Advertiser,* December 13, 1906; copied from the *Columbia Statesman,* November 30, 1906.

On June 4, 1928, Dr. Williams wrote to me: "Your recollection, as reported to me in your letter of May 31, that I told you that I had secured the information about the Missouri Seal from Captain A. A. Lessueur is correct. ***

"I hope that you will succeed in having historical justice done in the matter of the designer of the State Seal. *** Your booklet, 'Burckhartt, Designer of the State Seal,' is a real contribution to the history of our State."

Captain Alexander A. Lessueur was born November 25, 1842, in St. Louis. He served in the Civil War and later as Legislator and was Secretary of the State from 1888 to 1900. He was a man 22 years of age when Burckhartt died. He was a personal friend of Governor Thomas C. Reynolds, who returned the State Seal in 1869, it having been taken by Clairborne F. Jackson when he fled from the capitol at the beginning of the Civil War. Governor Reynolds said on numerous occasions that Burckhartt was the designer of the Seal. These facts he gave to A. A. Lessueur, and they were recorded by the late Walter Williams.

It is strangely convincing that this tradition should live through all the years following 1822 unless there was some substantial foundation for it. Captain Lessueur's daughter, Miss Octavia, of Los Angeles, who assisted her father during the twelve years he was Secretary of State, said in an interview with Henry T. Burckhartt of Los Angeles:[12]

"I have always understood that George Frederick Burckhartt was the designer of the State Seal."

There is now living a granddaughter of George Frederick Burckhartt, Mrs. George Ella Miller, of Sumner, Missouri. In a conversation with Mr. Floyd Shoemaker, Secretary of the Missouri State Historical Society, and myself on July 25, 1928, she said:[13]

"I am the youngest daughter of the late Dr. C. F. Burckhartt and the granddaughter of George Frederick Burckhartt, who devised the coat-of-arms for the State of Missouri. My father's house was built of hewn logs of walnut timber. The shingles and weatherboarding were of walnut, all of which were cut from the land on which he settled. I remember grandfather visiting us in this old house and how we all sat about the fireplace talking. His person was so impressive. His hair was white and his shoulders slightly bent

[12]See the Smiser Collection.

[13]*Ibid.*

with the weight of years. I remember distinctly of my father and my grandfather talking over the settlements of Randolph County and the adjoining county of Chariton, for grandfather had lived in each county at the time they were organized, all of which territory was originally Howard County.

"I also recall hearing my grandfather and his sons discuss the affairs of the State Government in pioneer days. He told us how he was chosen by the 'select committee' of the House to submit a design for the State Seal, how the design was accepted without change and that it was often spoken of as the Burckhartt Law. ***

"Many times in later years have I heard my uncle, the late George Hobbs Burckhartt, the 'Old Judge,' as he was familiarly known, tell of his father devising the coat of arms for Missouri."

Mrs. Betty Burckhartt Talbot wrote me May 29, 1928, that her cousin, the late Judge George Hobbs Burckhartt, son of George Frederick Burckhartt, had on several occasions said to her:[14]

"Betty, you will in the future hear it denied that your Uncle George, my father, designed the Missouri State Seal. There was high feeling at the time and men of the day refused to credit my father in history with this work. I want you to know and always stand firm in your statement that George Frederick Burckhartt designed the Missouri State Seal. My father has told me many times why he suggested the emblems and devices found on the State Seal."

It was generally known in Howard County and surrounding territory, prior to 1847, that George Frederick Burckhartt was the author of the State Seal (the bill). The late W. T. Dameron, Huntsville, said that he had heard old settlers of Randolph County state this fact and that he had never heard it disputed. The following persons have made definite statements giving George Frederick Burckhartt credit for the authorship of the State Seal: Mrs. Ella B. Jackson, Huntsville, June 6, 1928; Miss Bettie C. Burckhartt, Los Angeles, formerly Fayette, Howard County; Mrs. Lydia Stewart Herndon, New Franklin, Missouri, June 11, 1928; Mr. Dick Crews, Columbia, Missouri, and the late Col. Switzler, Columbia, Missouri.[15]

On October 14, 1930, Mrs. Georgianna Dolan of Hannibal, Missouri, in an affidavit, stated to me that prior to 1875, while

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.*

she was a student in the Old Watson Seminary at Ashley in Pike County, she prepared an essay on the subject of George Frederick Burckhartt, Designer of the Missouri State Seal. She stated as follows:[16]

> "The history or gazetteer from which I secured material on Burckhartt, Designer of the State Seal, was an old history my father had in his library. My father, Judge George Washington Matthews, was a great student of history and had secured many old histories on the Government of the United States and biographies of Washington, Jefferson and other leaders of the day. Also many histories of the first states and colonies of the United States from the beginning of settlements made in America, which gave accounts of pioneer life and civilization. In the old history or gazetteer, I recall very vividly that it was conceded that Burckhartt was the designer of the State Seal and that the object of my paper was to bring this information before the class, as we had been studying the history of Missouri. ***

Mr. Walter C. Knaus, formerly of the County Court of Howard County and of the Springfield Security Company, a venerable gentleman of the old school, wrote me as follows on October 25, 1928, he being then in his 86th year:[17]

> "Replying to your inquiry with reference to 'Uncle George Burckhartt,' desire to say that I knew him well, his familiar face and figure being among my earliest recollections in and about the village of New Franklin, until my 21st year, when as you state he died in 1864. ***
>
> "Many times 'from away back,' the historic event has appeared in public print. He was a man of learning, of very general, even wide intelligence, his character commanding universal respect."

Walter Knaus was known to George Frederick Burckhartt, and was a personal friend of Perry S. Rader, who, upon reading the above letter, testified to the authorship of Burckhartt's designing the State Seal, and exclaimed:

"I could never doubt any testimony given by Walter Knaus!" Whereupon he (Mr. Perry S. Rader) recalled his article on the State Seal, in June, 1928, which was waiting publication in the *Missouri Historical Review.* He delayed publication of his article for the

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*

second time upon my presenting additional data giving more credence to the Burckhartt claims and printed it in April, 1929.

The foregoing evidence should be extremely convincing. It would have been impossible for this tradition to have been constructed. It is verified by so many persons who would have no personal interest in its perpetuation.

On December 7, 1928, the late Perry S. Rader, who for many years was reporter of the Supreme Court of Missouri, wrote me a lengthy letter regarding the history of the Missouri Seal. I quote in part from his letter:[18]

> "Two of the members of the 'Select Committee' were from Howard County, where Mr. Burckhartt resided. They had been placed on the 'Select Committee' by Speaker Geyer, who had been much interested in the bill providing for a seal of State at the previous session. It was very unusual to place two representatives from the same County on the 'Select Committee.' ***
>
> Perhaps there was an understanding between Green and Geyer. Perhaps Green was a personal friend of Burckhartt in Kentucky and Missouri. Perhaps Green had told Geyer about Mr. Burckhartt. Perhaps two representatives from the same County in which Mr. Burckhartt and Green resided were placed on the 'Select Committee' by Geyer at Green's request. It is certain that the law prescribing the emblems and devices was not framed by members of either House. There were only three members who were capable of framing the law in the technical language of heraldry which it employed. They were Green, Leduc and Geyer. Green seems to have been satisfied in engineering the matter; he seems to have taken no part in actually framing the law. The *Journal* fails to show that Leduc had any part in framing it, or took any interest in it. Geyer was the Speaker, and the *Journal* shows that he proposed only one bill during the session, and that contained the proceedings of the Court. It is doubtful if there was another member of either House who really understood the meaning of the word 'or' or the words 'passant guardant' or the word 'gules' or the words 'parted per pale,' used in the law. *** Many things indicate that Mr. Burckhartt did understand that language and it is the persistent tradition that he was the 'Designer of the Seal,' by which is meant, I think, that he chose the emblems and devices and assisted in framing

[18] *Ibid.*

the law, and not that he was the artificer or mechanic who constructed the metallic Seal. ***"

I feel that Mr. Rader, in the above quotations from his letter to me, has clearly set forth the situation. It seems obvious from the Wells letter that he did not come into the picture, so far as the legislation was concerned, until after the 1st of January, 1822. We know that the bill, as finally passed by the Legislature, was introduced on the 31st day of December, 1821. Mr. Wells apparently does not claim credit for this bill, as he would not have stated that it was so badly punctuated and italicized. He does state that he performed the function of the revision in 1824-1825.

So far as anyone has been able to discover, there is no tradition which credits Judge Wells with the authorship of the law which the late Walter Williams has termed the "Burckhartt Law," though he may have had something to do with the drawing of the Seal as it would appear when engraved or painted. On the other hand, however, the Burckhartt tradition has persisted for more than one hundred years from many independent and disinterested sources.

George Frederick Burckhartt was a prominent citizen of Howard, Chariton and Randolph Counties a century ago and five times representative of the latter two counties in the State Legislature.

Quoting from the *Kansas City Star*, February 14, 1933:

"Uncertainty of long standing as to who was the designer of the great seal of the State of Missouri has been ended, officially, by acceptance of findings of several Missouri historians, which accord the honor to George Frederick Burckhartt. *** Research upon the question by Dr. Walter Williams, president of the University of Missouri; Dr. C. H. McClure, Kirksville, head of Social Science, Northeast State Teachers College, Kirksville; Perry Scott Rader, historian; Mary Miller Smiser, historical research worker, all of which is on file in the State Historical Library, Columbia, found in favor of Burckhartt and was made official recently when the senate adopted a resolution accepting the findings."

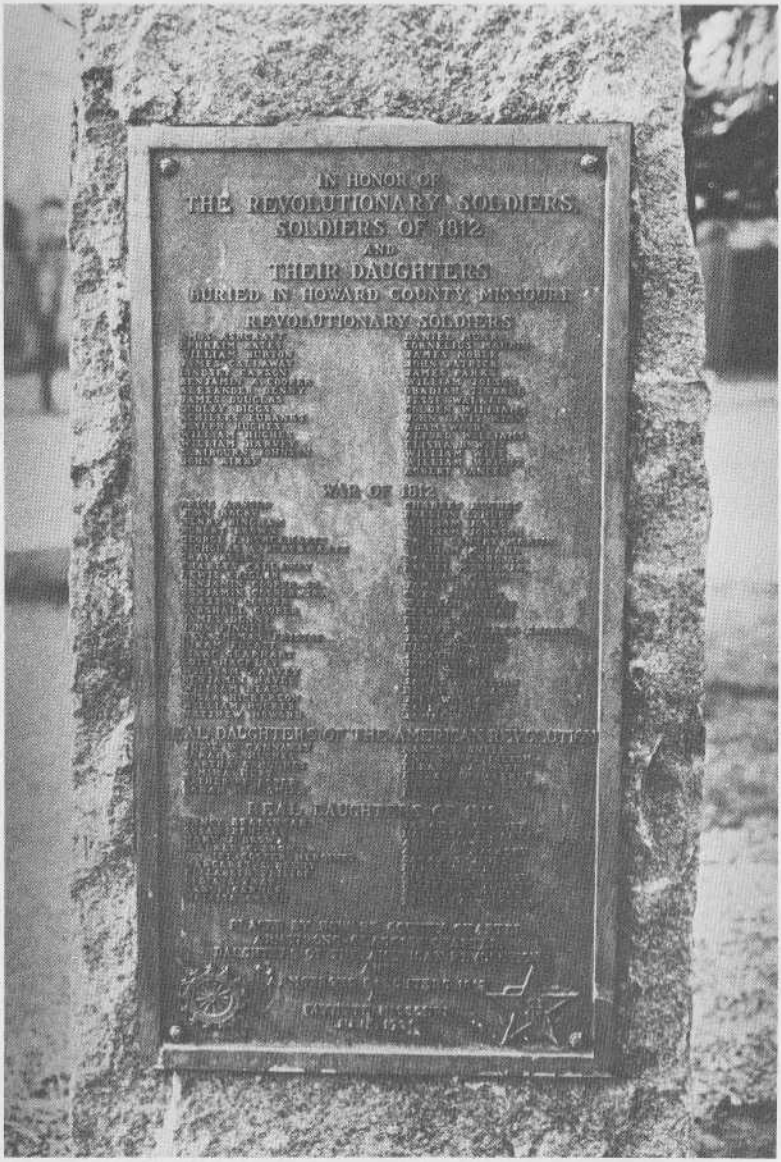
George Frederick Burckhartt was a teacher, a soldier, a legislator, a judge, a patriot, a public-spirited citizen and a Christian gentleman of the old school, who served, worthily and well, his day and generation.

Unveiling a Monument to the Designer

of the Missouri State Seal, Fayette, Missouri

CHAPTER V

"TO PRESERVE THE PAST



Bronze Tablet, 1937

CHAPTER V
"TO PRESERVE THE PAST"

During the controversy, those involved have remained on the most affable terms and enjoyed the friendship of fellow workers in state and local history. On September 29, 1968, the Johnson County Historical Society, assisted by the Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce, presented the dedicatory program for the Warrensburg Historical Marker, located on Business Highway East 50. Dr. Floyd C. Shoemaker delivered the address. On this day, Dr. and Mrs. Shoemaker were guests in the Smiser home.[1]

I have deposited in the Johnson County Heritage Library the original historical research, consisting of various documents, articles, letters, and other evidence collected over the years bearing on the authenticity and merit of the claim that George Frederick Burckhartt alone conceived the design of the Great Seal of the state of Missouri.[2] The documented and traditional data have been secured from the most reliable sources available. I especially invite the reading of my reply to the Burckhartt-King controversy on the authorship of the State Seal of Missouri.

The presentation and advancement of Missouri history is a common aim that unites us all. After more than one hundred years, the tradition that George Frederick Burckhartt was the designer of the state seal of Missouri remains vibrant. As Dr. C. H. McClure has written: "Disagreements, variations, and errors in details and non-essentials are the strongest proof of the truth of a tradition."[3]

To preserve the words of the past which existed in the memories of men and women and in the available written proof has been the motivating purpose of my endeavors. This contribution has been made for the enrichment of the annals of state and local early Missouri history.

Mary Miller Smiser
June, 1982

[1]See the Smiser Collection, Heritage Library Archives, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Mo., especially letters from Floyd C. Shoemaker to Mary Miller Smiser since 1936.

[2]See the Smiser Collection.

[3]*Ibid.*

CHAPTER VI

BURCKHARTTS IN MISSOURI HISTORY

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The history of Missouri is linked with the great westward movement of population in America that began shortly before the Revolutionary War and reached its high point in the Nineteenth Century. The explorations of Daniel Boone in eastern Kentucky, in 1769 - 1771, mark the initial stages of that migration. Boone and his companions were followed by an ever-increasing stream of pioneers from the back country of Virginia and the Carolinas. These new settlers were generally of quite a different type from the great planters of the tidewater estates. Here and there were Yankees, or Germans from Pennsylvania; but the majority were of English and Scotch-Irish stock of Virginia and the Carolinas — restless, adventurous, enterprising.

At the close of the Revolutionary War new settlers poured into Kentucky by the thousands. Families uprooted by the war, soldiers and officers with western land grants, the restless and adventurous — they all joined this migration to the virgin land between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi, Christopher Frederick Burckhartt and his young and growing family were a part of this westward movement.

The Burkhartts came to America from Rhenish Germany prior to 1725, arriving at the port of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. George Burckhartt, the father of Christopher Frederick, was born in Pennsylvania in 1725 and died September 18, 1804, in Frederick County, Maryland, where his will was probated April, 1805. He married Mary Catherine Miller on January 19, 1749.[1]

In Maryland, the George Burckhartt family lived on a tract of land known as "Peace and Plenty," near the town of New Market, in Frederick County. During the Revolutionary War, a house on this tract was used as a rendezvous for Tories.[2]

Three Burckhartt sons, Christopher, George, and John, served on the Committee of Observation, Frederick County, prior to the War for Independence. After the outbreak of hostilities, all three gave volunteer service in the Colonial Army. Twenty-one-year-old Christopher Burckhartt served as a volunteer in the 8th Pennsylvania Continental Line. According to family tradition, handed down from generation to generation, General George

[1]See the Smiser Collection, Heritage Library Archives, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Mo.

[2]*Ibid.*

Washington chose Christopher Frederick Burckhartt to act as an interpreter in the meeting with the Hessians on the night of the crossing of the Delaware, because the young soldier spoke German well.[3]

After the war, Christopher Burckhartt returned to Maryland. On November 16, 1780, he was married to Elizabeth Hobbs, a member of one of the oldest and most highly respected families of the early English colonists.[4]

In 1795, Christopher Frederick Burckhartt, with his wife and six children, joined other families from Maryland in the great push westward along the river valleys, seeking new homes in the great unknown country in the far American wilderness. Traveling the Wilderness Road to the Ohio River, the pioneer families took passage by boat for Louisville, Kentucky. Near Cincinnati, as was the custom, necessitated by the Falls of the Ohio, they changed to flatboats and thus arrived at Louisville. Here the Burckhartt family lived and prospered. Christopher Frederick Burckhartt, his wife, and his younger children lived in Jefferson County. Other members of the family scattered to nearby counties as shown by court records, deeds, and wills which give their place of residence.

By the turn of the century, westward-moving pioneers had covered both Kentucky and northern Tennessee with scattered settlements. Many of the original pioneers looked with adventurous spirits at the unclaimed and virgin lands across the Mississippi. Daniel Boone, who had led the way in Kentucky, once more turned his gaze westward; under his leadership, a new movement began.

In 1809, Christopher Frederick Burckhartt and his family left their comfortable Kentucky home of culture and refinement and came by river transportation to St. Louis County. Here they remained for two years. In 1811, the Burckhartt family moved still farther up the Missouri River, settling finally in Boone's Lick Country.[5]

The eastern section of the United States suffered a severe economic depression in 1814. Hard times, coupled with the political events that had been shaping the destiny of the newly formed nation over a period of several decades, turned attention once again to the western lands. Already, in 1804, the region soon to become known as Missouri had begun to assume an inchoate political reality. The U.S. Congress had created out of the original Louisiana

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

Purchase the District of Louisiana and the Territory of Orleans. The Territory of Orleans became, in 1812, the state of Louisiana. At the same time, the District of Louisiana became the Missouri Territory, with a bicameral legislature and a delegate to Congress.

Political recognition, together with the impetus of the unsettled times, stimulated a flow of new settlers across the Mississippi. Even before the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the inhabited strip of land across the Mississippi consisted primarily of sturdy pioneer stock from Kentucky and Virginia. After the creation of the Missouri Territory, that inhabited strip had doubled in size — from twenty miles wide to forty miles wide — and become divided into two tiers of counties.

Between 1804 and 1820, the Territory of Missouri became American both in government and in character. Although French influences persisted longer in the Mississippi settlements, the coming of the newspapers and the steamboats soon put an end to the old regime. St. Louis, founded in 1763 as a fur trading post, was a bustling western town of 4,000, with two newspapers and a fire engine. Ste. Genevieve, the first permanent settlement in the region (about 1735) had 2,000 inhabitants. The Boone's Lick settlements, Franklin particularly, reproduced the early days of Kentucky. By 1820, there were some 60,000 inhabitants — a figure which, according to precedents set in the Old Northwest, made a territory eligible for statehood.

Missouri became a state on August 10, 1821. Historians have described the Missourians of that decade as "a buoyant, optimistic people, quick to take offense, and preferring a rude and ready justice; indeed, they had the faults and virtues of the frontiersman everywhere, but they kept the Anglo-Saxon reverence for law and order."[6] Missourians were predominantly an agricultural people: one of the territory's foremost attractions was the fertility of her land. "Hardeman's Garden," five miles up the Missouri River from Franklin, is a microcosm that does much to explain the lure of Missouri's land to her early settlers. John Hardeman was a North Carolinian who gravitated to the Missouri Territory in 1819 by way of Tennessee. His dream was to create a botanical garden that would outshine any such garden west of the Alleghenies. By 1822, he had realized his dream to such an extent that people came all the way from St. Louis to see the ten-acre tract of serpentine walks, rose-covered bowers, and exotic fruits and flowers that bordered

[6]Walter Williams, *The State of Missouri, An Autobiography* (E. W. Stephens Press, Columbia, Mo., 1904), p. 16.

the river.[7]

The western communities were a curious mixture of frontier exuberance and metropolitan urbanity. George W. Dameron, one of Randolph County's early settlers, describes the times as turbulent and violent — marked by foot races, fist fights, rough and ready physical activity:

> In my young days boys and girls would ride horseback eight and ten miles to go to church and never think anything about it. Sometimes the boys and girls too, would have no shoes to wear and would go to church barefooted, and go courting barefooted too; but times have changed now, and unless a boy wears tooth-pick shoes, smokes cigarettes, parts his hair in the middle and rides in a buggy to see his girl, he is considered a back number and too green for anything. Wood choppings and quiltings in the day and a ball at night was all the go when I was young. Before I professed religion many a time did I chop wood all day and dance all night. We had no "hugging" dances in those days as I hear they have now-a-days. We danced the old "Virginia Reel" and the old "hoe down" to a finish[8]

Mary Miller Smiser, in an unpublished biographical sketch of George Frederick Burckhartt, delineates the other side of this picture of the New West:

> The frontier period of the Boone's Lick Country was one of color and from the beginning held the key to the interpretation of life in Central Missouri. The culture brought in by the pioneers soon became rooted in the new life, which was largely traceable to the fact that many of the settlers had college educations or at least cultural backgrounds known in the homes of the Old South. Gracious living was enjoyed in many homes. There were servants to look after the preparing and serving of foods and nursemaids for the children. Franklin was the capitol of the Boone's Lick Country and the cradle of the Santa Fe trade. There were schools and the newspaper, the *Missouri Intelligencer,* was published in 1817.[9]

[7]Lilburn A. Kingsbury, "Hardeman's Garden," (An unpublished manuscript, located in the Smiser Collection).

[8]George W. Dameron (from an unpublished manuscript, located in the Smiser Collection).

[9]Mary Miller Smiser, "Burckhartt and the State Seal," (An unpublished manuscript, located in the Smiser Collection.

It was at the Boone's Lick Settlement that Christopher Frederick Burckhartt established his final homestead. Although the new settlers were attacked by Indians who burned homes and carried off livestock, the hardy and reliant pioneers soon built forts and stockades for protection. Here they lived during the War of 1812. Here the younger children of Christopher and Mary Catherine Burckhartt grew to maturity.[10] Descendants of these early settlers are today living on the land that their forefathers secured in Territorial days. Of particular interest for this sketch is the eldest of the Burckhartt children, George Frederick.[11]

George Frederick Burckhartt was born in Frederick, Maryland, on October 4, 1782 — just fifteen days before the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. He grew to young manhood in New Market and Fredericktown, Maryland, where he attended school. It was the custom of the early German immigrants to bring their ministers and schoolmasters with them. The Burckhartts are referred to in the old court records, Frederick County, as "Gentlemen Farmers."

In 1802, George immigrated with his father and his family to Kentucky, settling near Louisville, Jefferson County. Here he taught school and became involved with the development of the business and governmental affairs in that new environment. On January 4, 1803, at Elizabeth, Kentucky, George Frederick Burckhartt married Miss Ruth Dorsey. The Dorseys were an old and highly respected family of Maryland, descended from Edward Dorsey, 1649, emigrant colonist from England. Ruth Dorsey, born July 17, 1780, was one of those sterling pioneer women who, through heroic toil and sacrifice, helped shape the foundations of American democracy. She was the mother of nine children, five girls and four boys; all but one, Elizabeth Hobbs, she reared to maturity.

In 1811, Henry Clay and the "War Hawks" — convinced that the British were responsible for the Indian raids and massacres on the American frontier — seized control of Congress and demanded war. When this second war with England began, on June 18, 1812, George Burckhartt enlisted. He served as Major in the Third Regiment of the Kentucky Militia, under General William Henry

[10]See the Smiser Collection.

[11]Documentation for the following biographical information about George Frederick Burckhartt may be found in the Smiser Collection. See, particularly, the following unpublished manuscripts: Walter Ryle, "George Frederick Burckhartt"; Mary Miller Smiser, "Burckhartt and the State Seal"; Mary Miller Smiser, "Ancestral Colonial Families, Burckhartt-Dorsey and Kindred of Maryland."

Harrison. Major Burckhartt followed William Henry Harrison through the bloody and fierce frontier struggles to the culminating triumph of the Battle of the Thames.

Severe economic depression in the eastern section of the United States, coupled with spectacular advertisement of the West, caused thousands of people to seek new beginnings on the frontier following the close of the War of 1812. In 1816, George Frederick and Ruth Dorsey Burckhartt and their four young children joined in this westward migration. They, along with several other families of Kentucky, made the trip to Missouri in a keel boat built by James Winn of Red Hills, Kentucky. They left Louisville, Kentucky, and floated down the Ohio River to the confluence of the Mississippi. They then traveled up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, then up the Missouri River to Old Chariton, about where the town of Glasgow stands today.

On the boat there were two cabins for the women and children. If there were sufficient wind, the sail was used. Otherwise, the boat was towed by a crew of twenty to forty men on shore walking single file, pulling on the thousand foot line attached to the boat. The journey upstream was slow, requiring three months. At night, the boat was tied up and the crew often slept on the ground, if weather permitted, leaving more room on the craft for the women and children. The slaves that were brought did the cooking and nursed the children. Frequently in the evenings, on looking back, one could see the smoke of the breakfast campfire, so slow had been the progress during the day.

In the spring of 1817, Duff Green, a prominent citizen of the Boone's Lick region, laid out the town of Chariton near the confluence of the Chariton River with the Missouri. The town became the center of a settlement in the eastern part of Howard County.[12] On March 23, 1818, George Frederick Burckhartt became its first justice of the peace. George took an active interest in the affairs of the early government. Although he was a Whig and a staunch supporter of his party, he served five times in the Missouri General Assembly, representing Chariton and Randolph

[12]See Journals 1928-1929, in the Smiser Collection. Mrs. Cammie Walton, of Lexington, Missouri, said in an interview with Mary Miller Smiser: "My grandfather, James Monroe Winn ... built and piloted the towboat that brought your great grandfather George Frederick Burckhartt and family to Howard County. The men brought slaves and money in gold, in kegs. Each man bought a thousand acres of land. We attended the Old Chariton Church northeast of Franklin. Your grandfather was a good man, square-shouldered and well-built, and came to Church with your grandmother. She wore fine clothing and a black bonnet, bought in St. Louis — better than you or I wear today. I can see just where they sat in Church."

Counties, when the man rather than the party was the first consideration of the voters. It was well-known that George Burckhartt would discharge his whole duty to his country and state, and because of this fact, he was chosen for positions of trust and prominence. The handwriting of George Frederick Burckhartt is plainly readable on the old Chariton County Records as far back as 1821-22, and on the Howard County records as far back as 1818.

Here, in the virgin forests of the northeastern part of the Boone's Lick Country, George Burckhartt acquired fourteen hundred acres of valuable agricultural land and built his permanent home. His farm was located near the place where Milton was established nearly a quarter of a century later. Through his industry and wise management of finances, George became one of the leading farmers of his day. Although tobacco was his chief source of income, he also raised hogs, cattle, and kept fine horses.[13]

Baptized into the German Lutheran Church at an early age, George Burckhartt was a devout Christian. On coming to Missouri, he joined the Methodist Church; when the division arose over slavery, he allied himself with the Southern wing. He gave the ground in Old Milton for the Methodist Church house that was erected in 1840; and he donated the walnut timber and helped to hew the logs from which the house was built.

Both able and popular as a legislator, George Burckhartt devoted much time to the development and improvement of the roads and highways of Missouri. He was chairman of the standing committee "on Salines," and he was a member of numerous important select committees. Although George Burckhartt retired from active politics in 1858, his friends urged him to enter the canvass for the legislature in 1860. He refused, claiming that a man who had reached his seventy-eighth year should be excused from leading a ticket in a strenuous campaign. However, he was active in the organization of the Opposition party during the state canvass. In the critical year of 1861, George Burckhartt was counted as a Unionist.

[13]See the Smiser Collection. It is said that George Burckhartt owned some of the finest horses in north Missouri. Although he enjoyed nothing better than a good horse race, and was the proud owner of a number of good race horses, he forbade them to be raced on Sunday. The story is told that, one time when George Burckhartt was absent from home, one of his neighbors stealthily took one of his horses from the stable and raced it on Sunday. When George returned home and learned about the matter, which vexed him, he remarked to his wife, "Well, Ruthy, it is hard for one to preserve his Christian integrity and own race stock when away from home trying to do his duty by his country."

To George and Ruth Dorsey Burckhartt were born nine children. Two of the sons, Dr. Christopher Frederick Burckhartt and Judge George Hobbs Burckhartt, lived in Randolph County, where they reared and educated their children:

George Frederick Burckhartt died March 29, 1864, at his home in New Franklin, Howard County, having returned ten years before to the county in which he had first lived on coming to Missouri nearly fifty years before. He and his wife Ruth Dorsey were buried at Old Milton, near the "Burckhartt Fields," their old home. The bodies of George and Ruth Burckhartt were reinterred in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, New Franklin, Howard County, on September 21, 1931.

Dr. Christopher Frederick Burckhartt was born December 24, 1805, and died January 25, 1875. He was married to Elizabeth Ann Hill of Virginia in 1837. She was born in 1809 in Virginia, and died in 1870, in Jacksonville, Missouri. Dr. Burckhartt was a Randolph County physician and landowner, a trustee of McGee College, and a soldier in the Black Hawk War. To this union were born two sons and four daughters: Sellman, Susan, Harriet, Mildred, George Ella, and Frederick.

COAT OF ARMS

The Burckhartt Coat-of-Arms is very attractive. My copy is done in water color. Blue predominates with gold.

The name Burckhartt, Burckhart, Burkett, is found on page 147 of the *General Armory* by Burke (Publ. Harrison, 59 Pell Mell, London).

Emblazoned 1873 as follows:

ARMS: Az., a chevr., three garbs Ar.

CREST: A garb Or.

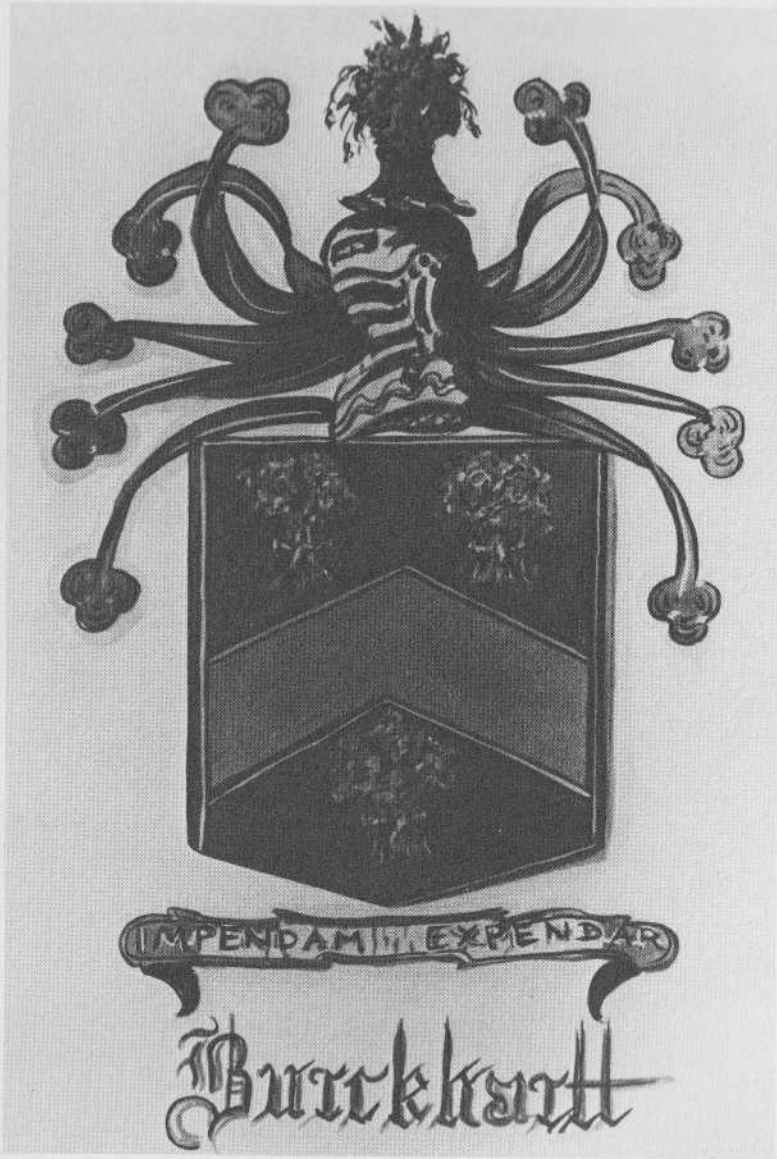
MOTTO: Inpendam expender. ("I will spend and be spent.")

(Ax., azure, blue, air, summer, childhood, justice, hopeful, ardent, Sapphire, Jupiter.)

(Or., gold, yellow, light, moon, fortitude, Topaz, Sol.)

THE CHEVRON: Is one of heraldic ORDINARIES. And was taken from the gable of a house. It is used today on the sleeve of our military soldiers. It is a piece of steel bolted to the shield to render strength.

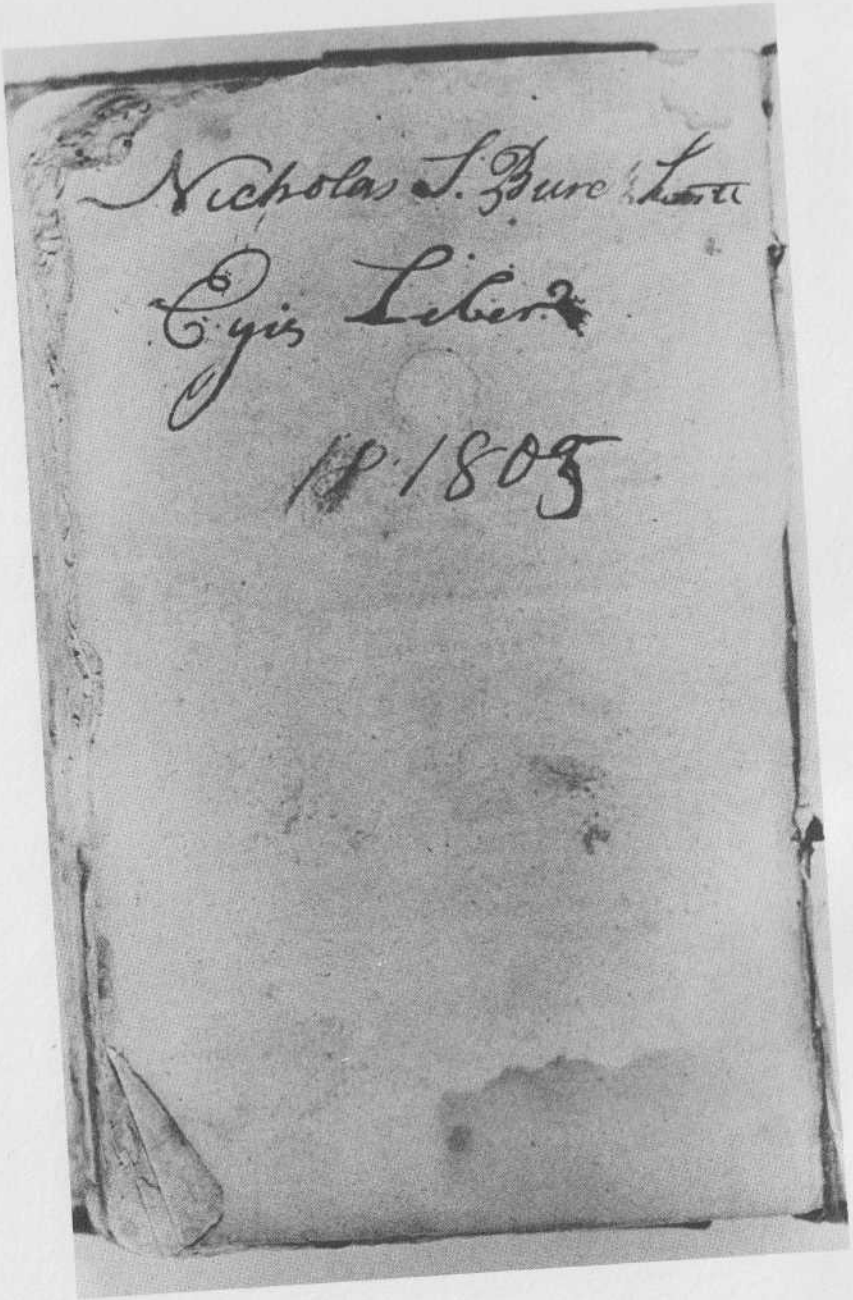
THE GARB: Is a sheave of wheat. It denotes land-owner.



Burckhartt Coat of Arms

CHAPTER VII

"EYIE LIBER"



"Eyie Liber"

CHAPTER VII
"EYIE LIBER"

Recently a Latin Grammar, published in 1732, Hull, England, was found in Howard County at the dispersal sale of the estate of Charles Elliott, New Franklin, Missouri. Inscribed in ink on the flyleaf was the name of George F. Burckhartt, and on the inside page, the name of his younger brother, Nicholas S. Burckhartt, 1803, "Eyie Liber."[1]

In Maryland, the "land of the Gentleman Farmer," the Burckhartts were respected and distinguished for their cultural and educational attainments. George, in his early manhood, was a school teacher, known for his scholarly interest in the classics and classical language. Interested in heraldry, the Burckhartts had their own coat of arms.[2]

Nicholas Sellman Burckhartt was born in Maryland in 1792. In 1795, the Burckhartt family immigrated to Louisville, Kentucky. Nicholas liked school and, like his brothers and sisters, received classical training. It was while living in Louisville, as a schoolboy of thirteen years, that Nicholas claimed possession of the Latin Grammar, "Eyie Liber."

When the Burckhartts left Kentucky in 1809 to settle, first, in St. Louis and, two years later, in Boone's Lick Country, they carried their library with them. The Latin Grammar was used in the "Fort Schools" of newly organized Howard County during the War of 1812-1815 and loaned to kith and kin. Nicholas was, with two of his brothers, a veteran of the War of 1812.

The Burckhartt family helped to settle and organize the newly created Missouri Territory. "Young Nick" was associated with his father Christopher Frederick Burckhartt at "Burckhartt Lick," making salt which sold for $1.25 per bushel. In 1816, Nicholas was appointed sheriff of Howard County. In the *Missouri Intelligencer*, one of the first newspapers to be established in the new territory, the name of Nicholas Sellman Burckhartt appears prominently in notices relating to administrative tasks associated with his position as sheriff. On the occasion of the Independence Day celebration in Franklin in 1819, both Nicholas and George Burckhartt are

[1]See the Smiser Collection, Heritage Library Archives, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Mo.

[2]*Ibid.*

recorded as offering toasts: Nicholas, to the "brave generals Warren and Putnam, the heroes of Bunker Hill," and George, to "The Congress of the United States."[3]

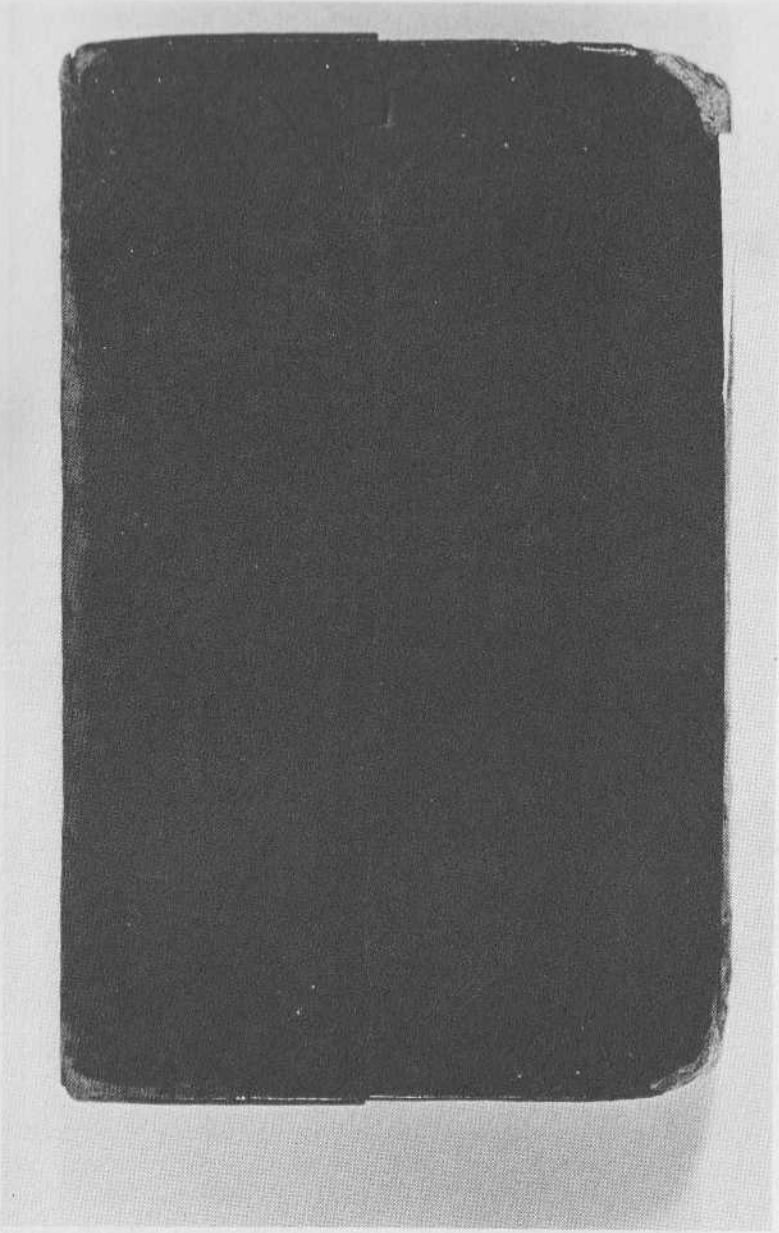
Nicholas Sellman Burckhartt was married to Miss Sally Rose of St. Louis in 1818. The Rose family had immigrated to America from Rhenish Germany.

Both George and Nicholas served in Territorial General Assemblies and helped to set up the machinery of government for the new state of Missouri. Nicholas was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1820. He was a member of the House of Representatives, 1822-1824; from 1824-1834, he was in the Senate. He was President pro tem of the Senate at the time of his death in the cholera epidemic of 1834. He went to the home of a friend to give aid, where he contracted the disease and died the next day.

Nicholas Burckhartt owned more than 1500 acres of land and was considered a wealthy man in his day. The brick house that he built on his estate north of New Franklin, in Howard County, was a landmark for many years — a remarkably fine example of Missouri architecture, traceable to Maryland and Virginia influence. In 1942, when the old mansion was being dismantled, the parlor room was obtained for the American Period Wing of the St. Louis City Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.

Now, after a lapse of some 150 years or more, the Latin Grammar that once belonged to "Young Nick" Burckhartt has come to light — evidence that the early settlers in Howard County brought with them both the spirit and the equipment for an oasis of civilized society in the midst of the frontier. Such mute spokesmen of the past illuminate vividly for us the lives of those early Fort Settlers in the Boone's Lick Country. The slender, calf-bound volume has charm and significance. To own it is a precious experience.

[3]From the *Missouri Intelligencer*, July 16, 1819. Recorded by Robert Gaugh. See also the Smiser Collection.



Burckhartt Latin Grammar

Nicholas Sellman Burckhartt Parlor Room,

1832, New Franklin, Missouri

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Miller Smiser, humanitarian, holds both the A.B. and M.A. degrees from Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, Missouri, and has done graduate work at the University of Southern California.

Honored at the 1972 Centennial Observance at Central Missouri State University as one of sixteen outstanding living graduates, Mrs. Smiser is listed in the *Standard Biographical Dictionary of Notable Women* and *Who's Who in American Education.* She is a member of the following professional organizations: North Central Missouri Genealogical Society, Kappa Delta Pi, State Historical Society of Missouri, American Association of State and Local History, National Society of Daughters of American Revolution, National Society of American Colonists, Pioneer Families of Missouri, National Society of Magna Charta Dames, The Society of Descendants of Knights of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, National Society of the Daughters of 1812. She has been honorary State President of the National Society of the Daughters of 1812; as past Vice-President of the National Society, she promoted the research program, War of 1812 in Missouri and the marking of historical sites.

Under Mrs. Smiser's leadership as president, the Johnson County, Missouri, Historical Society initiated plans to purchase and restore the Old Johnson County Courthouse; opened a Pioneer Museum; and established the Heritage Library for genealogical research.

The author of numerous articles of original historical research, Mrs. Smiser has also written the following: *The Golden Years,* a collection of folklore and highlights of Johnson County, Missouri; *Campus Personalities, Biographical Sketches of Women of the Faculty of Central Missouri State University.* She organized the publication of *The Bulletin,* Johnson County Historical Society. Mrs. Smiser is now president emeritus of the Society.

Praising Mrs. Smiser as "a driving force in the preservation of Johnson County history," an editorial in the Warrensburg *Daily Star-Journal* stated: "Because of her keen interest, many facts of historical significance will survive for future generations."